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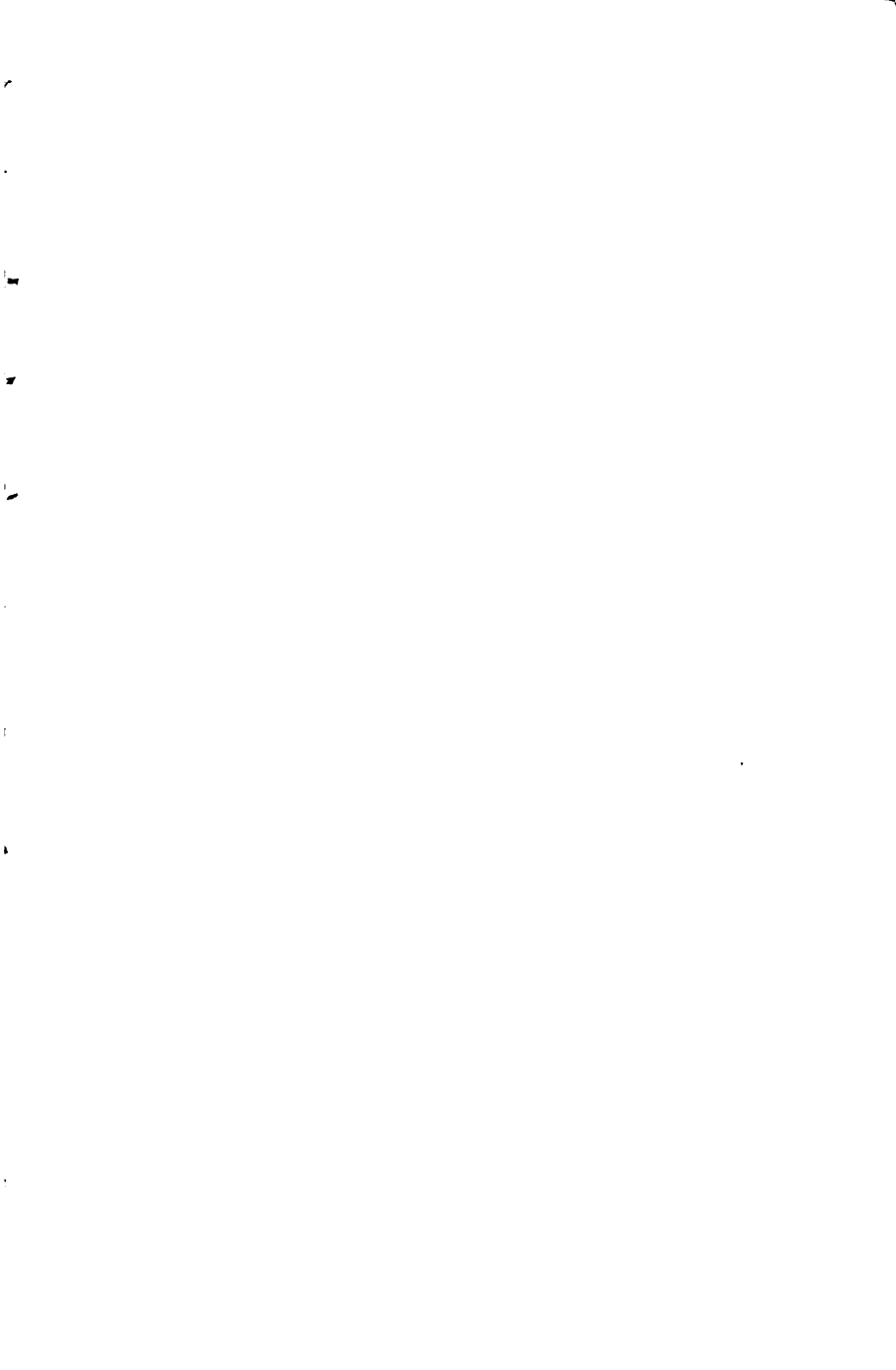
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## **THE INNOCENT MURDERERS**













**“A young woman named Ernesta Frost,  
a senior in the college”**

# The Innocent Murderers

*By*  
**WILLIAM JOHNSTON**  
*AND*  
**PAUL WEST**



**NEW YORK**  
**DUFFIELD AND COMPANY**  
**1910**

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*Published, March, 1910*

THE PREMIER PRESS  
NEW YORK

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**THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE  
PROFESSOR**





## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE PROFESSOR**

IN the simplest of occurrences the greatest of events have their beginnings. One of our Aryan ancestors sought a place where the fishing was better and the migration of races began. In an equally simple way begins this account of the most remarkable mystery of the present century.

Josiah Hopkins, professor of chemistry in Graydon College, bade his wife good-bye at precisely 8.41 o'clock on the morning of May 18, 1908, and departed from his home for his laboratory in the college building.

Under his arm he carried the small black bag holding his luncheon and class papers, just as he had carried it on every college day for the last eighteen years. He went directly to his laboratory where he received his various classes and lectured to them in his accustomed

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manner. Nothing unusual was noted in his demeanour. He was abstracted, alert, didactic, tolerant, brusque, affable, by turns, exhibiting as always contradictory traits that would have occasioned comment only by the absence of any or all of them.

The last class for the day having been dismissed, Professor Hopkins repaired to the little room partitioned off from the main laboratory, where he was wont to conduct his private experiments and researches, leaving the task of rearranging the apparatus, chemicals and books used during the day to his assistant, a young woman named Ernesta Frost, a senior in the college, to whose scant income the small fee thus earned was a most welcome addition.

In every detail so far this day was a duplicate of almost every previous day in Josiah Hopkins' life since he had first come to Graydon as instructor in chemistry. But the deadly sameness ceased then and there, marking the eighteenth of May as a day long to be remembered in the history of the little college.

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No hint of this was generally evident until the next morning, when the first chemistry class for the day reported at the laboratory at nine o'clock. The door was locked. This was unusual, unheard of. Ernesta Frost should have been there some time before this hour, to prepare the laboratory for the day. On the closed door a note was pinned. It was in a scrawly hand, not at all like the neat chirography of the professor, and merely stated that Professor Hopkins had been called away unexpectedly.

The astonishment created by this simple announcement can scarcely be realised by those unacquainted with Professor Hopkins. Never before, in his professional career, had he lost a college day. That he had not expected to miss this one was plain from the unusual care with which he had arranged for the day's class work on the previous afternoon. What, then, could have called him away so unexpectedly? It must have been something that he had failed utterly to anticipate, or he would have mentioned it to some-

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body. But had he done so? Perhaps to Ernesta Frost. One of the students recalled that, on returning to the laboratory at dusk, the evening before, he had found Professor Hopkins and Ernesta still there, standing with their backs to the door, in a further corner of the room, intent, apparently, on the perusal of some papers. They had noticed neither the student's entrance nor departure. If Professor Hopkins knew at that hour of circumstances necessitating his going away, doubtless he had told Ernesta all about it. Yes, she would be able to elucidate matters.

The crowd of waiting students about the laboratory door grew larger. The Dean, observing this, came himself to see what was occasioning the caucus. They showed him the closed door and the scrawly note. The Dean made no effort to conceal his surprise at the contents of the note. Professor Hopkins called away? He had received no notification of the fact. Professor Snyder passed. To him the Dean turned for a possible explanation. Had Professor Hopkins said anything

## THE PROFESSOR DISAPPEARS 7

to him about going away? No. Professor Snyder hurried on to his room, and Dr. Fischer and Professor Rice came through the hall. When the Dean stopped them and asked them if they had been in communication with Professor Hopkins concerning his mysterious departure from Graydon, they shook their heads and looked at each other strangely. Young Professor Gordon was the next to be catechised.

"Why, no, sir," he said. "Professor Hopkins said nothing to me. Have you inquired—I mean—maybe Professor Rice or Dr. Fischer would know."

"I have already asked them," said the Dean. "They have told me they knew nothing about it. Why, may I ask, do you think they should know?"

Professor Gordon mumbled something in reply, and walked away, blushing and hanging his head. "Odd, very odd," thought the Dean.

In the meantime a messenger had been dispatched to the Hopkins residence. He re-

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turned with the news that, although he had rung the bell several times, and was sure that he had seen Mrs. Hopkins through the curtains, he could obtain no answer to his signals.

Another messenger was hurried to the house where Ernesta Frost boarded. Pending his return, the Dean ordered all the students to other classes, and stood alone by the laboratory door. Surprise at Professor Hopkins' mysterious departure, injured dignity that he had not been consulted in the matter, and anger that one so trusted should have upset matters in this manner, were the feelings that controlled him. The idea of any professor going away and leaving no message but a note pinned on his laboratory door! Under any circumstances he should have written a note, explaining matters to his Dean! Suddenly it struck the Dean that the note was not in Professor Hopkins' handwriting at all. He scrutinised it at close range, critically. No, there was no mistake; he knew Professor Hopkins' writing too well to be deceived.

## THE PROFESSOR DISAPPEARS 9

Who, then, had written the note? The Dean uttered an exclamation. That scrawly, hurried, careless hand! Yes; no; yes! It was the penmanship of the Greek professor, Snyder! Yet Snyder, if he had written the note, must have been told by Hopkins that the latter was going away! And he had denied that he knew anything about it. How was this? And why had Gordon suggested that Snyder might know——

The Dean turned sharply on his heel with the intention of confronting Snyder with this sudden development. He found himself face to face with a stranger, a tall man, with a heavy moustache and a square jaw. He looked at the Dean through a pair of steely blue eyes, and did not seem at all embarrassed by the sudden encounter, though the Dean was completely taken back.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the stranger calmly; "but are you Professor Hopkins?"

"No," said the Dean confusedly, "I am not. Did you wish to see him?"



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"Yes," said the stranger. "Can you tell me where to find him?"

The Dean was about to exclaim, "That's exactly what I would like to know!" but he contented himself with saying:

"Professor Hopkins is—he has been called away unexpectedly."

"Out of town?"

"Er—yes—out of town," asserted the Dean. "Is there—can I—was it personal business?"

"Yes," said the stranger; "I wished to see him about some books he was thinking of buying. If you could tell me when he is expected back——"

"No," said the Dean, trying to conceal his embarrassment, "no, I don't think I could—exactly."

"Perhaps there is somebody who could?"

"Well," said the Dean, "I don't——" then, with a sudden thought: "You might ask Professor Snyder."

"Snyder?" the stranger repeated the name. "Where is he?"

## THE PROFESSOR DISAPPEARS 11

To direct the stranger to Professor Snyder's room, the Dean stepped out of the alcove by the laboratory door and pointed down the long hall of the college building. The stranger thanked him, hoped that he had not given him too much trouble, and went toward Snyder's room. The Dean turned again to the laboratory door and raised his hand to take down the note. His idea was to compare it with some specimens of Professor Snyder's handwriting in his possession.

His hand went forward, stopped, and the fingers spread out straight and stiff in a gesture of bewilderment. The note was not there!

The Dean stared at the door. Footsteps approached rapidly. He turned to see if it could be the stranger coming back; he would demand the return of the note, which he had no doubt the stranger had plucked from the door. But instead of the stranger it was the messenger who had been sent to Ernesta Frost's boarding-house. Breathless, he gasped:

"Ernesta—not there! Bed not slept in! Gone!"

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An apoplectic flush suffused the Dean's face. He choked. As a realisation of what this new tidings meant came over him, it was accompanied by a feeling of responsibility. The scandal must be suppressed; at least for the present. He grasped the panting student by the wrist and dragged him along the hall toward his office. Once within the room, he closed and locked the door; then fell speechless into his chair.

## **THE BLACK BAG'S CONTENTS**



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE BLACK BAG'S CONTENTS

THE Hopkinses lived in a roomy old house that stood far back among the trees on the main street of Graydon. It was a methodical household. Every morning at eight o'clock Mrs. Hopkins set her husband's breakfast before him. At 8.41, every college day, he left the house.

In the afternoons, when his day's class work was done, the professor was accustomed to spend some time in his laboratory, making experiments the result of which was recorded from time to time in various scientific quarterlies of dignified and learned dulness. In the evenings, after supper, he was wont to withdraw into his study, there to ponder, far into the night, over books on chemistry, metallurgy and mineralogy.

It was generally known that Mrs. Hopkins

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had little sympathy with her husband's life work. But their home life, in its way, was entirely happy. Every morning, before the professor was up, Mrs. Hopkins brushed his clothes and laid out a clean collar for him. On Sundays and Wednesdays she put the buttons in a fresh shirt. Such duties as these she considered her life's mission, and she enjoyed them fully as much as the professor did his scientific experiments. Each month when he drew his salary he gave it to her. She kept what she needed for current expenses and deposited the rest in the village bank to their joint account. They entertained nobody except other professors and other professors' wives, and went nowhere except occasionally to these friends' houses.

But a cloud had been forming in their little sky, though it was apparent to the eyes of Mrs. Hopkins alone. For a month previous to the professor's strange disappearance she had noted a peculiarity in his actions. One night, after he had remained up later than usual, he had tossed in his sleep and muttered

a great deal. She ascribed it to malaria and for a few days made him take boneset tea and quinine. As these homemade remedies had no appreciable effect, she put it down to nervousness and sighed to think that he would not take a rest.

The professor's habits grew more and more irregular. He stayed up later each night; he frequently missed his meals, failing to return from college in time for his supper on three occasions. Remonstrated with, he grew petulant, and took to returning to his laboratory in the evenings, sometimes remaining there as late as midnight. He told his wife that he was conducting an important series of experiments for which he could find no time in the afternoons.

A man who, in eighteen years of married life, has never been detected in a lie to his wife can tell her almost anything and have her believe it. Years of good behaviour place a husband on a pedestal from which the worst of appearances cannot displace him. Yet no pedestal is built upon a foundation firm



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enough to withstand the terrible force of woman's gossip!

One afternoon the wife of Professor Snyder dropped in to see Mrs. Hopkins. They ran the gamut of calling conversation. The nineteen faculty families were discussed and dissected. Still Mrs. Snyder lingered.

"Professor Hopkins has not been looking well lately," she ventured, after a pause in the conversation.

From the prolonging of her caller's stay Mrs. Hopkins was sure that she had come with some particular object. Instinctively she felt that this was about to be revealed, but she was sufficiently circumspect not to manifest any undue interest. So she replied indifferently:

"I had not noticed one way or the other. Perhaps he is working a little too hard, but he will not listen to me."

At first Mrs. Snyder made no reply. A scornful smile curled her lips. She rose and walked toward the door. Not until she stood

on the threshold did she speak. Then she said decisively:

"Yes, we have been talking of that. He spends most of his evenings at his laboratory, doesn't he?"

"Yes," said the unsuspecting Mrs. Hopkins. "He is conducting some important experiments."

"So I understand," said Mrs. Snyder. "Very important! And very scientific!" She paused to watch the effect of this shot upon Mrs. Hopkins, and enjoyed seeing her wince. Then she continued:

"And I believe very interesting! In fact, I think they would interest you especially!"

"I don't think I quite understand!"

"I mean—and say it not as a trouble-maker, but as your best friend—I would make it a point to find out just what these experiments were and who spends the evenings with the professor while he is making them!"

Before the distressed wife could rally to her husband's defence, Mrs. Snyder, her

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deadly shot delivered, had gone, leaving her alone to face a situation absolutely novel to her. Her first thought was one of amusement at the absurdity that Josiah Hopkins could be guilty of deceit. Her next thought was one of indignation that Mrs. Snyder could dare to make such an insinuation. If Professor Hopkins had arrived at that moment he could have reassured his wife, and the third thought never would have come. But, alas! It did come.

His peculiar behaviour of the last few weeks! His absence from home every evening! His abstraction! His petulance! Scientific experiments had never before affected him thus. There must be something wrong.

The troubled woman made a brave struggle to drive these thoughts out of her mind. She prepared supper, and decided while doing this that Mrs. Snyder was a gossiping trouble-maker. As though her Josiah—poor, patient, shabby Josiah—could be guilty of——pooh!

Nevertheless, she was determined to watch him closely.

It was Saturday evening; the professor should be home early on a Saturday. But the afternoon passed, it came six o'clock, the supper hour, and he was not at home. When he finally arrived it was evident from his manner that he was greatly excited over something. He barely spoke to his wife or noticed the children during the meal, and when he had bolted it, he went directly to his study, where he remained until long after his wife had retired.

On Sunday morning Professor Hopkins accompanied his family to church; but the same abstraction he recently had observed all the time possessed him, and he hardly seemed to be aware of where he was. In the afternoon he put on his hat, saying that he must go to the laboratory, and though he returned in time for tea his actions were in no wise different from the previous day.

That night when he had gone to bed, his wife listened to her husband's laboured breathing. She made sure that he slept soundly, then she slipped quietly out of bed, picked up

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a candle, and crept into the hall, carefully closing the door behind her. Guiding her way by the dim light, she moved softly down the stairs into the professor's study. She gave a little cry of satisfaction as her eyes fell on the black bag, in which he always kept his papers, lying on his desk. Though on six days in the week she was accustomed to put his luncheon in his bag, she had never before been sufficiently curious to examine its contents. Now, however, she upset the shabby receptacle, and began a systematic inspection of what it held.

There were some sheets of foolscap carefully folded. She recognised these from their external appearance as examination papers, and put them aside as not worth further scrutiny. There were many smaller bits of paper, some crumpled, covered with the letters and figures of chemical formulæ. Though familiar with the appearance, if not the meaning, of these, she went over them one by one.

We can always find that which we dread. Mrs. Hopkins' search was rewarded. Hardly believing her eyes she held one crumpled slip

under the flickering rays of the candle, her hand trembling so that she could scarcely hold the paper still enough to read it. But she did read it, and it said:

"SATURDAY.

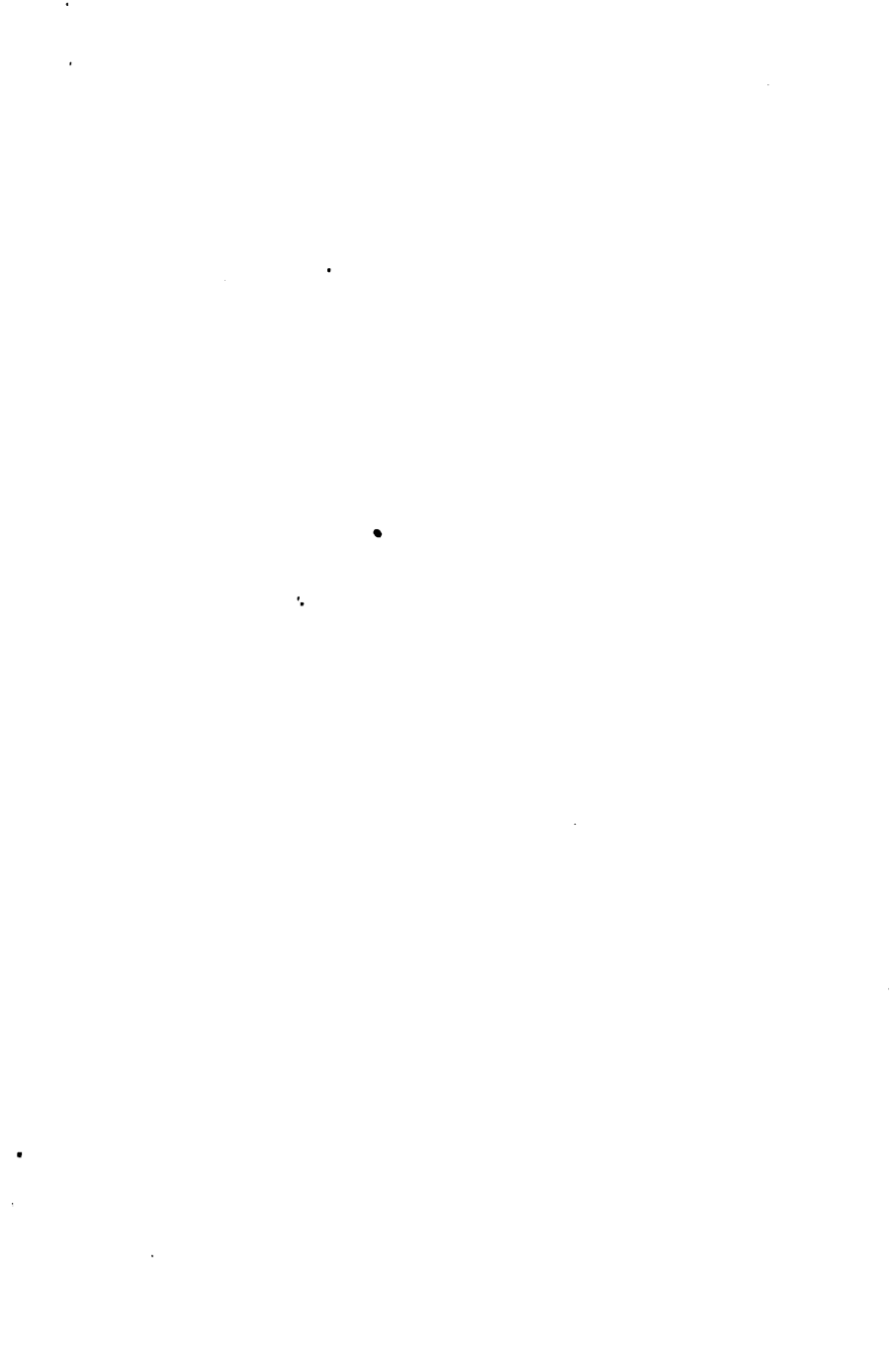
"*Dear Professor Hopkins:*

"I am ready to go wherever you wish. Have no fear that I will give a hint of your plans to anybody. You may rely on me absolutely.

"ERNESTA."

Stunned by her discovery, Mrs. Hopkins reeled and fell against the desk, upsetting the candle, which rolled to the floor and was extinguished. Then, in the dark, she groped her way to the door and crept noiselessly upstairs to bed.

•



**ENTER DETECTIVE SULLIVAN**





## CHAPTER THREE

### ENTER DETECTIVE SULLIVAN

PROBABLY there were not ten persons in Graydon who could not have enlightened Mrs. Hopkins as to the identity of "Ernesta." No all-conquering football eleven or speedy crew has yet brought such fame to this ancient college as to swell its roll of students to large proportions. Even an inconspicuous freshman is easily identified by seventy-five per cent. of the villagers, and Ernesta Frost was by no means one of the least conspicuous students. That Graydon is a co-educational institution has already been inferred. That is the only modern departure it has ever made. The admission of young women to its benefits being comparatively a recent innovation, their presence in Graydon has not yet lost its novelty, and each of the feminine students stands out strongly marked and commented upon by the population.

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But Mrs. Hopkins herself, thoroughly consistent in her lack of interest in matters educational, never had paid the slightest attention to the personnel of her husband's classes. As the sleepless hours wore on she mentally enumerated the people she knew in the village; but though she tabulated them all, there was none among them bearing the name of Ernesta. Thus, by the simple process of elimination, she came to the conclusion that if Ernesta were not a villager, she must be a student of the college. This point settled, her mind reverted wrathfully to the contents of the incriminating note. Though she had read it but once in the candle light, every word had burned itself into her memory.

"Dear Professor Hopkins"—even the simple and customary "dear" stirred her anger. Not that she herself often used the word, for ordinarily she spoke to and about her husband by his academic title. The "dear Josiah" of her courtship was so long ago as to be almost forgotten. Perhaps its very disuse by herself made the fact of its being employed by an-

other seem like an infringement of her marital rights.

As to the body of the note, what could it mean except that the girl and Professor Hopkins were preparing to elope! As Mrs. Hopkins came to this conclusion she could scarcely restrain herself from awakening her husband and shouting into his astonished ear that she had just discovered his guilty secret.

The note was dated Saturday. This was Sunday night. Evidently it would not be long before the guilty pair would try to get away—if unmolested. She must see to it that her husband was deprived of every opportunity to escape from Graydon.

Mrs. Hopkins could not repress a feeling of grim satisfaction as she thought of what she would do to Ernesta as soon as she could find and expose her. With savage joy she mentally created an Ernesta, the sort of Ernesta she would have the most pleasure in destroying—an Ernesta of the clinging variety, with blue eyes and golden hair. Jealous women always

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invent a blond villainess, and in this case Mrs. Hopkins was correct in her surmise that Ernesta was fair-hued and blue of eye. With the determination of seeking out this skirted usurper of her matrimonial throne, Mrs. Hopkins dropped off to sleep shortly before rising time, with a plan already formed of bringing her husband to book.

If the professor's mind had not been adsorbed with other thoughts, he might have noticed that his wife was strangely silent at breakfast, that Monday morning. He would have observed, also, that she watched him with an unusual interest. She, in her turn, wondered at his apparent calmness. He must be a scoundrel of even deeper dye than she had imagined, to betray not even the slightest sign of his perfidy. She endeavoured to trap him into exposing himself.

"Professor," she said, with a herculean effort against exhibiting her excitement, "college is nearly over, and I've been thinking if we couldn't have your sister down here for Commencement; that is, if——"

Her husband noticed the pause, as she hoped he would, and asked:

"If what?"

"If—if you want to," finished Mrs. Hopkins weakly. What she meant to imply was, "If you are going to be with us," but her husband's air of innocence proved that he had not caught her meaning.

"Very well," he replied, "suppose you invite her."

His words and tone were innocent enough, yet at the same time she inferred that it was an assumed innocence.

Professor Hopkins left the house as usual, carrying his black bag, in which his wife had placed his luncheon. Almost tearfully she wondered, as she put it in the bag, wrapped in a napkin, whether she would have many more opportunities to do this little kindness for her recreant spouse! The note from Ernesta and all the other papers belonging in the bag she had replaced with care; she would give him no hint that she had learned of his treachery. Then, when she saw him go down

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the path and disappear from view up the street, she wondered if he could really be as bad as appearances indicated. She gazed at the receding figure, with its slow, almost plaintive shuffle, its bent head and studious air, and almost doubted the evidence she had already accumulated.

But she turned from the window resolutely, and ran into the dining-room. On the shelves of the cupboard were newspapers, carefully preserved for this purpose. In an old Boston newspaper on the second shelf she had noted, weeks before (and merely by accident, with no thought of ever having occasion to remember it), an advertisement which read:

**WATCH YOUR HUSBAND!**—Allen's Detective Agencies furnish PROOF. Skilled detectives at your instant disposal. Confidences strictly preserved. Prompt response to letters and telegrams.

To transcribe to paper the telegram which Mrs. Hopkins had already mentally composed was a minute's work. Then she threw her hat upon her head and hurried to the tele-

graph office. On the telegraph operator she enjoined strict silence, and left him wondering at the strange message which she left with him. The receipt of this message in Boston, a few minutes later, resulted in Detective Philip Sullivan's jamming a few necessities into a valise and hastening to catch the first train connecting with Graydon.

The telegram sent, Mrs. Hopkins mechanically turned her steps toward the college, bent on the annihilation of Ernesta. Soon, however, discretion overtook her, and she decided to postpone her rival's destruction until later; perhaps until the detective should have arrived from Boston and secured facts for her that she considered were necessary to make the chain of evidence complete.

All day the unhappy wife attended to her household duties, and the professor's supper was ready on time. But he was late, and a dreadful foreboding came over her. He was not coming home at all. This was the night selected for his departure with Ernesta.

At half past seven she could stand the sus-



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pense no longer. She put the children to bed, and, as soon as she made sure that they were asleep, she slipped a shawl over her head and hurried out toward the college. The building was in darkness. The light she had half hoped to find in the laboratory window was not there. She tried the front door of the building. It was locked. She stood there for a moment debating what she ought to do next. Should she arouse the village and tell everyone that her husband had deserted her? The distracted woman had no longer any doubt that she was too late, and that Professor Hopkins had fled.

In her terror and loneliness she suddenly thought of her children. Her poor, fatherless, deserted little children! She turned and fled blindly home, trembling in every limb.

Moaning with the sense of desolation, she entered the little house, now so changed in a few hours, and threw herself on the sofa in the parlour, where she burst into sobs. She was aroused by the sound of steps on the gravel path. Through force of habit she went

to open the door, believing that it was her husband. Ordinarily she would have greeted him at such an hour with a frown for his lateness; now she was ready to welcome him with an embrace, for, after all, the fear that he had gone away would be allayed.

There was a knock at the door. It was not the professor, then. Who could it be? Another knock. Why did not the person ring the bell? A third knock, and she mustered up courage enough to ask who was there.

"Is this where Mrs. Margaret Hopkins lives?" a strange voice called from without. This was the name she had signed to the telegram. It must be the detective. She opened the door to find a tall man, square-jawed, heavy-moustached, standing on the porch. With a woman's intuition she knew him for what he was, and asked him to step in.

He handed her his card, and said:

"I have come in response to your telegram."

"Yes," faltered Mrs. Hopkins, "I telegraphed you. Won't you be seated?" She showed Mr. Sullivan into the parlour, noting,

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as she did so, how eagerly he scanned every detail of the room.

His eyes seemed to rest on a photograph of her husband, which hung above the mantelpiece.

"Mr. Hopkins?" he asked quietly.

"Professor Hopkins," she corrected him.

"Please sit down."

Detective Sullivan, however, remained standing, and his gaze wandered continually about the room. Mrs. Hopkins began to grow nervous. What if the professor should return and find him here!

"You—you came promptly," she ventured.

"Yes," said Detective Sullivan, standing by the mantel and examining a group picture of Professor Hopkins and his chemistry classes, which stood beside the clock. As Mrs. Hopkins watched him he took the photograph in his hand and turned it over to look at the back of it, which he seemed to be studying. Suddenly he looked up and said:

"You said the case was urgent. May I ask what it is?"

ENTER DETECTIVE SULLIVAN 37

"My husband," said Mrs. Hopkins, dashing into the hideous business precipitately, "my husband has eloped!" Detective Sullivan looked at the photograph of the professor on the wall, and started. A look of incredulity seemed to mark his face. Mrs. Hopkins, observing this, continued:

"Yes, eloped with a girl named Ernesta!" And then, the gate being opened, the bitter flood of words gushed forth. All the harsh things she had been imagining about Ernesta now found expression. She was beginning a tirade against her supposed rival when the detective interposed.

"Don't get excited, madam," he said calmly. "When did they go?"

"To-night!" she sobbed.

"To-night? And you sent the telegram this morning! Then you knew they were going?"

"I thought so—I didn't know. I found the note the woman wrote to my husband, last night."

"What did the note say?"

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"I—I haven't it," cried Mrs. Hopkins, bitterly, 'as she blamed herself for her stupidity in returning the piece of damning evidence to her husband's bag. "I put it back in my husband's satchel for fear he'd find out I knew about it."

"Humph! Where's the bag now?"

"With him, wherever he is. He goes nowhere without it."

"What did the note say?"

Mrs. Hopkins repeated it word for word.

"Who is Ernesta?" the detective asked, as she finished, with a sob.

"Who is Ernesta?" snapped Mrs. Hopkins. "If I knew, if I knew anything about the whole case, do you suppose I'd have sent for a detective? I want you to find out who she is, how long this has been going on, where they've gone—everything."

"Calm yourself, madam," said the detective. "I imagine I can locate them. But before I go any further I—ahem! It is customary with us, with clients whom we don't know, to insist on a fee in advance."

**ENTER DETECTIVE SULLIVAN 39**

"How much do you want?" asked Mrs. Hopkins.

"In view of the few clues we have to work upon," said the detective in his most impressive professional manner, "we shall have to ask a preliminary fee of one hundred dollars."

Mrs. Hopkins gasped. A hundred dollars is no mean amount to be deducted from the exchequer of a small-college professor. But she hardly hesitated. She had determined on her course, regardless of expense.

"I haven't that amount in the house," she said, "but I'll get it from the bank the first thing in the morning."

"That will be quite satisfactory," said Sullivan. "Now, I shall have to get a few points to help me." So he set about catechising Mrs. Hopkins till she had told him how long ago she and the professor were married, his habits, the circumstances of the late nights in the laboratory—everything.

"And this is the professor," he said, pointing at the group photograph, which he was studying carefully. The picture showed a

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middle-aged, scholarly looking man in a torn coat—his classroom uniform—a pair of spectacles resting on a high, bald forehead, a black beard plentifully sprinkled with grey. It was hardly the type of a Lothario, and Sullivan could not refrain from suggesting the fact.

“Are you quite sure your husband has eloped?” he again asked Mrs. Hopkins.

“What else?” she asked. “Everything points that way. The note signed Ernesta——”

“Ernesta? Was that all the name signed to the note?” He was turning the photograph over again and examining the back, which seemed to interest him greatly.

“That was all,” said Mrs. Hopkins, shaking her head. “I hope you will be able to find out who she is.”

“I have already done so,” said the detective quietly, as he replaced the photograph on the mantelpiece. “Her name is Ernesta Frost. She is one of your husband’s pupils, a tall, slight girl——”

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"Blonde!" sobbed Mrs. Hopkins.

"You know her?"

"No; but I knew I was right. Go on."

"She is a blonde," continued Sullivan, "I think about twenty-two years old. Rather—yes, very—good looking. In fact, I may say, the most attractive of the professor's pupils."

"Don't, don't," expostulated Mrs. Hopkins, intolerant of the detective's praise of her rival. "You are very wonderful at finding things out!"

"I keep my eyes open," said the detective, "that's all." He cast another look at the photograph, and taking his hat went to the door, where he stood with his hand on the knob. "Now, Mrs. Hopkins," he said, reassuringly, "don't worry. We'll locate this pair. If you hear anything, I'm at the hotel. They think I'm a book agent. Above all don't say a word about this to a soul. Understand? Not a word! If they ask where the professor is, tell them he's gone away. I'll see you tomorrow. Good-night."





**THE SHADOWS ON THE BLIND**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SHADOWS ON THE BLIND

DETECTIVE SULLIVAN left the Hopkins house well pleased with the result of his visit. He had been in Graydon now only a scant two hours and already had learned much that would be useful in building up a case. It was about nine o'clock when he said good-night to Mrs. Hopkins and started toward the village.

Ever alert and a believer in the adage that procrastination is the thief of time, he decided to take a stroll around the college before returning to the hotel, to familiarise himself with every point in the case. So he turned his steps in the direction of the hill on which the building was situated. But, prompt as he considered himself, Detective Sullivan was too late to witness a succession of scenes that would have helped him to solve instantly what was destined to prove the greatest puzzle of his detective career.

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Directly after supper, that evening, four men had left their homes and hurried to the college building. They were members of the faculty. The quartette consisted of Professor Snyder, in whose room the meeting took place; Professor Rice, the mathematician; Dr. Fisher, the German teacher, and young George Gordon, the professor of ethics. An oddly assorted group, yet now of but one mind.

The quartette was gathered about a table in the Greek professor's room. They had waited until everybody had left the building, then, on tiptoe, they had stolen in. Now, although the college was absolutely deserted, they were speaking in whispers, and the door was locked. From the precautions taken, and from their mysterious manner, they evidently regarded the business in hand as of the greatest import.

The original Graydon College had been a squat, solid structure of native stone, two stories high. A wide hall divided each floor into two large, rectangular rooms. As, from

time to time, more space had been required, the building had been extended backward, and east and west wings added, until in shape it resembled a great "T." Recently a cupola had been erected on the old front part of the building, relieving its flattened out appearance, and housing a small telescope presented by a grateful alumnus.

The broad staircase in what had been the rear of the old building still remained the only means of passage from the first to the second floor. A smaller staircase led from the upper hall to the roof, but by some miscalculation it did not open into the cupola but ended in a hooded door some twenty feet from it.

The classroom of Professor Snyder, the Greek scholar, was the fourth room on the west side of the hall; Professor Hopkins' laboratory took up all the second floor in the west wing of the front of the building. Thus the windows of these two rooms were at right angles to each other, and though they were a floor apart, it was perfectly feasible to look

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from one room into another. In the peculiar location of these rooms lay the origin of the mysterious meeting now taking place.

"If you are certain of what you say, Professor Snyder," said Professor Rice, with a slow, calculating manner, "it is a situation that requires the most careful and thoughtful handling. I think we should all prefer to hear the proposition again before we begin to decide on any plan of solution."

The Greek professor was not at all averse to repeating the story which he already had told his colleagues. He said:

"The circumstances were these, gentlemen. Yesterday evening, Sunday, I had occasion to come to my classroom for some papers which I had forgotten and needed for to-day's work. It was about six-forty-five,"—Professor Rice made a note of the time—"and quite dark in the building, into which I let myself by my key. I reached this room and, as I rummaged for the papers, I happened to glance out of the window. To my surprise I observed a light in Professor Hopkins' laboratory.

"Suspecting some student prank, I decided to investigate. The curtains of the laboratory window were closely drawn, but I could see dim shadows of some person or persons moving about the room. I watched closely, hoping to identify the trespassers should they come near the window. My hopes were realised. The persons stepped close to the curtains and stood there, their profiles sharply marked in silhouette. I immediately recognised one of the shadows. The stooping shoulders and long beard could belong to nobody but our colleague, Professor Hopkins. I was about to turn away, satisfied that all was right, when to my dismay I noticed that the other figure was that of a woman.

"As I watched them, endeavouring to discover who the woman could be, it became plain to me that they were engaged in some earnest transaction. Professor Hopkins held a graduating glass in his hand—or so I judged it to be—and he and the woman watched it with interest. Both appeared to be talking, and Hopkins was gesticulating. The woman



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finally clapped her hands together, and at the same moment Hopkins put the glass down and threw his arms about his companion. She, on her part, returned the embrace, and, gentlemen, I am of the opinion that they kissed each other!"

The Greek professor stopped, partly to observe the effect of his statement upon his colleagues, and partly in surprise at the intensity of the moan that escaped the lips of the professor of ethics. The deepening dusk prevented the others from seeing the expression of pain on Gordon's face, accompanying the sound that he made. Therefore they misinterpreted the meaning of the moan, and Rice remarked:

"It is, indeed, a shocking matter! Go on!"

"There is little more to tell," said Professor Snyder, with a sigh of regret. "The light in the laboratory window was soon after extinguished, and though I wished to do so I dared not leave my room to see who came out of the laboratory, for fear that I should be seen and my motives misconstrued."

"And you did not identify the woman?" asked Rice.

"No," said Snyder, "I did not, though I suspect——"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Dr. Fischer, impatiently, "dere iss no question who der voman vas. It vas——"

"Be careful," interrupted both Gordon and Rice, the former excitedly, the latter calmly but decidedly. Fischer, however, defiantly continued:

"Careful!" he said. "Do ve not all know who spends de evenings in der laboratory mit Hopkins? Iss dere any doubt in der minds of you gentlemens dat it iss his assistant, Ernesta Frost? Iss there, yes?"

"Hopkins, so I have understood," said Rice, "has been conducting a series of experiments and has had to be in the laboratory at all hours. If he has required the presence of his assistant——"

"Pooh!" sneered Fischer, "it looks as if der experiments had been in der field of love potions, from vat Snyder says!"

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Man of the world and hero of more than one duel of his youth, Fischer would have winced could he have seen the effect of his ironical speech upon Gordon. The young man—he was in his early thirties—gripped the edge of the table as though about to draw himself up and spring at the German. His teeth grated together, his eyes flashed resentment. But he seemed to master himself after a struggle, and sank back in his chair, his actions unnoticed by the others.

“While I consider Dr. Fischer’s remark ill-timed,” said Rice, slowly, “the facts in our possession certainly lead us to believe that he is right in his impression as to the identity of Hopkins’ companion. Furthermore, whether I am right in my conjecture or not, the fact remains that Hopkins has been guilty of an act which, should it become public, would lead to a disgraceful scandal. A college professor, above all men, deserves the harshest censure for such behaviour as that which Professor Snyder has related to us. Exposure of a thing like that would result in

incalculable harm to the college, especially to Graydon, a co-educational institution. It is fortunate that we have come into possession of the facts in time, so that we may act at once."

"What, then, do you suggest doing?" asked Snyder.

"There must be no public scandal," said Rice. "That, of course, is plain. To inform the Dean would merely be extending the knowledge of Hopkins' misconduct to another person. It would, of course, result in his demanding Hopkins' resignation from the faculty."

"Vell," said Fischer, "unless ve vish to see Graydon go to smash and all of us lose our positions, Hopkins must leave!"

"But why cannot we bring that about ourselves?" said Rice. "It is near the end of the term. Hopkins is in bad health. For him to hand in his resignation now would create little or no comment."

"You mean, then——?" asked Snyder, and Rice continued.

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"We must go to him, tell him of what we have learned, and demand, as his colleagues, that for our own protection and the good name of the college, he withdraw from the faculty."

Rice's decision, given in such a way that the others felt that it was final and must be acquiesced in, left them silent. It was a situation unusual in the life of a college professor, and they required thought before they could trust themselves to say anything in reply to Rice. Fischer sat back and hummed a German tune; Gordon leaned far over the table, his hands in his hair, his face tense; he of all the three was not thinking of the problem in hand. His thoughts were of the heart, not the brain; the thoughts of a man whose love and trust in a woman have been misplaced.

Snyder rose and paced the floor. They were still in the dark, having been too intent on the subject under discussion to think of requiring light. It was approaching eight o'clock. Snyder, in his uneasy course about the room,

passed the window. He glanced out, unconsciously, and saw something that brought a sharp exclamation from him. The others seemed to divine the meaning of the exclamation, and rose with one accord, tiptoeing to the window, through which Snyder pointed, with trembling hand, in the direction of the laboratory. The blinds of the laboratory window were down, but there was a light in the room.

Conditions seemed to be exactly as they had been the night before, and as though fate were playing into their hands, the watchers could see the shadows of two people distinctly painted on the curtains. One was unmistakably Hopkins, the other just as surely a woman, and, with little doubt, Ernesta Frost. The professor seemed to be talking earnestly. His finger moved in decisive gestures. The girl was giving him close attention. Finally Hopkins went away from the window, and the girl stood alone. She appeared excited and passed her hand across her forehead several times. The shadow of Hopkins again came

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within the range of vision. He had something in his hand which he proceeded to give to the girl. It was undoubtedly money. He passed a bill at a time to her, and when she had received all she placed the roll in the bosom of her dress. Then further speech by Hopkins, more careful attention on the part of his companion, and finally the watchers saw him throw his arms about the girl, and kiss her hurriedly on the cheek. When they had recovered their composure, the figures moved away from the window, and the show, for the time, at least, was over.

Snyder was the first to speak.

"If we needed more proof," said he, "it is finished."

"Not quite," objected the mathematical Rice, moving toward the door of the room. "But come, this is the time to secure absolutely convincing evidence. We will go to the laboratory."

"No," said Fischer, "we do not yet wish them to know what we know. We must observe without being observed."

“The skylight!” suggested Gordon, doggedly.

Close in front of the college building was a row of tall elms. These obscured the light from the front windows, and to obviate this trouble without sacrificing the trees, a skylight had been cut into the roof. It opened directly into the middle of the laboratory. The ceilings on the second floor were low, not more than nine feet intervening between the floor and the skylight. Gordon's suggestion, therefore, was welcomed as entirely practical. Rice leading, the four conspirators tiptoed up the wide staircase to the second floor. They listened a moment to make sure that nobody was loitering about the halls, then softly ascended the narrow stairs to the roof.

It was starlight overhead, but there was no tell-tale moon. They trod carefully over the resounding tin of the flat roof. A fountain of light rose upward through the open skylight. That it *was* open they noted with relief. Reaching the goal, as if by preconcerted signal they flung themselves flat on the roof and



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extended their heads over the opening. Any one looking upward at that moment would have seen a strange picture. Over the western edge of the skylight protruded the ascetic visage of the youthful Gordon, one long arm extended to hold his glasses on. Beside him was Rice, alert and cool, carefully surveying the room beneath in search of proof. Opposite them the bearded face of Snyder, twitching from nervous excitement, and on his right, both hands firmly clutching the edge of the opening, Fischer, whose dropsied eyes seemed almost ready to fall from his bronzed forehead as he stared into the mysterious room below.

On all the faces might have been observed a look of disappointment. The room into which they gazed was apparently empty. Yet as they looked and listened they heard sounds as if some one were moving around beyond the little partition at the end of the room, which divided the laboratory from the private room in which Hopkins conducted his more important experiments. They listened more closely

and exchanged glances. They were sure they were not mistaken. They could hear Hopkins' voice speaking in low but excited whispers, though at that distance the words were indistinguishable.

At length Rice withdrew his head and looked up. He rose to a standing position and the others followed his example, Gordon last. At a signal from Rice they moved to one side to discuss the situation.

"Since we have gone so far," said Rice, "we must see the affair to a finish!"

"I distinctly heard Professor Hopkins' voice behind the partition," said Gordon, excitedly.

"And the girl?" questioned Snyder.

"People do not talk to themselves!" said Fischer.

"I have it," exclaimed Rice. His eyes had been scouring the roof. Lying alongside the observatory dome he espied a small ladder. He pointed to it, then to the skylight, and the others grasped his idea. Snyder brought the ladder; the others lent eager hands, and it

was silently lowered down into the room below. It was somebody's turn to go first. The others hesitating, Snyder took it on himself to lead. He descended, stepping so carefully that not a sound could be heard. Rice and Gordon followed him at once. The rotund German professor looked dubiously at the slim ladder and then at himself.

"Vait!" he gasped.

But they did not wait, and his eagerness to be in at the dénouement overcame his fears of the descent. Clumsily he essayed the ladder. At almost his first step on the rounds, it began to slide along the floor, but he did not notice this at first. Nor did his companions observe his plight, for they had reached the floor and were creeping stealthily toward the doorway in the partition, from which came earnest whispers. As the ladder slipped entirely from beneath him, Fischer clutched at the edge of the skylight for support, but in vain.

The three professors had time to catch a single fleeting glimpse of the space beyond

the partition. As they expected, Professor Hopkins was there; but as they had not expected, he was alone. In one hand he held a tall graduating glass in which there was some chemical solution. At this he gazed in rapt attention, as it gradually changed colour. He kept up a running whisper of comment to himself as the experiment progressed.

"So!" they heard him say. "So! At last I have succeeded! I was right! Yes, I was right after all, and I shall be famous. It all rests with Ernesta—my happiness, my hope! My——"

Crash! The noise of a falling ladder and an explosive German oath, as Fischer was forcibly propelled half way across the laboratory floor, landing in a heap against the wall.

At the sound, Hopkins turned sharply, and for the first time became aware of the presence of the intruders. They could not move, and stood withering under his gaze. His face became contorted with passion; he trembled in an excess of rage. Then with a screaming imprecation he rushed toward them, still

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holding in one hand the graduating glass, from which spilled several drops of the liquid. With the other hand he clutched Rice by the throat, forcing the astonished man backward against Gordon and Snyder. Hopkins' face was the face of a madman, and his long beard bristled like the mane of a lion. His forehead seemed almost bursting with fury, his bent shoulders were straightened by the vigour of his wrath, and he seemed imbued with demoniac strength, so that he held Rice and the others as helpless as children.

In the next instant the rage in his expression gave way to fear. He relaxed his hold on Rice's reddened throat, and leaned back against a cupboard, cowering like a beast at bay. And still the four men did not move. They had expected nothing like this, and were overwhelmed. Then Hopkins spoke, but not in the voice to which they had become accustomed in the long years of their acquaintance. He shrieked:

"You spies! You thieves! So, you have been watching me, have you? You have been

playing the spy on my life work, and now, when it is about to fructify and bring me results beyond my wildest dreams, you are here to steal it! O, you miserable scoundrels, how much do you know? How long have you been keeping watch? Speak! Speak!"

Snyder was the only one who could find words. He said, in a tone that was meant to mollify the infuriated scientist:

"My dear Professor Hopkins, you do not understand us. We don't wish to steal your secret, whatever it is."

"You lie!" screamed Hopkins, "You lie! But you can't do it! No, by God, you can't! It is here! Here! Look at it!" He held the glass over his head and gazed at it fondly, adoringly, as a miser would look on gold. "See? You are too late! I have completed it and the world will know that it is mine. You, you are too late! Too late!"

"Wait, for God's sake, wait," said Rice. "We don't want to do you any harm, Hopkins! You must listen to us."

"Stand back," cried Hopkins, as Rice took

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a step toward him. "Stand back, or I will kill you!"

"Something must be done," said Rice to Snyder. "We must overpower him!"

Hopkins overheard this, and if he had been a madman before he was a raging beast now. "So," he howled, "you would use force! But you shan't! No, I defy you. Come on, come on, overpower me, if you will. You can. You are four to one. But it will do you no good. For see—see, I destroy the secret."

Before his dumbfounded spectators could divine his purpose, he lowered the graduating glass to his lips and drank the contents at one gulp. For a second or two he stood there, one hand clutching the door of the cupboard to give himself support. At first there was a mocking smile on his lips, but it gave way to a look of exquisite agony. His face turned livid, his eyes rolled upward, he gasped and swayed. They saw his muscles stiffen, his lips twitch, and then with a moan, he fell to the floor with a crash, hurling the glass to bits against the wall with the last movement of his arm.

Fischer, who during all this had remained on the floor, unable to move, scrambled to his feet, forgetful of his bruises, and rushed to the side of the prostrate Hopkins. The others, roused from the stupor into which this tragedy had thrown them, joined the German professor in lifting the inert body to a table. Rice seized a wrist, while Gordon put his ear to the man's heart. Fear predominated in the questioning looks which they threw at each other. Fischer caught up a bottle of ammonia and began applying it to the unconscious man's nostrils. Snyder scurried nervously about after water. For five of the longest minutes in their lives they laboured to resuscitate the victim of their unfortunate espionage.

Rice broke the awful silence.

"Gentlemen," he said in a whisper that was scarcely audible, "I am afraid that our efforts are useless!"

"He is not—dead?" gasped Gordon.

"He is," said Fischer. And he raised the white hand that he had been holding in his and laid it reverently across the breast of the



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man on the table. They looked at each other in terror. It is one thing to destroy a man's reputation, another to kill the man himself. Yes, kill; for they could not help thinking that they were directly responsible for Hopkins' suicide.

For a moment there was not a sound but the breathing of the guilty quartette. Then footsteps were heard. In a sudden frenzy of fear Snyder reached up to the electric light button that depended near him, and pressed it. The laboratory was plunged into darkness. The footsteps came nearer along the hall, stopped at the laboratory door. A hand tried the knob, and a voice called:

"Professor! Professor Hopkins!" Rice, standing next to Gordon, felt a spasmodic movement of the young man's body as the voice reached them. Silently he clutched at Gordon's sleeve. And then the voice came again:

"Professor, let me in. It is Ernesta!"

Another pause and the listening four imagined they could hear an exclamation of dis-

appointment or petulance from the speaker. Then another trial of the door knob, and still another pause. She must be looking through the keyhole. Thank heaven, one of them had had sense enough to extinguish the light! Then came the sound of footsteps retreating as though the girl had concluded that the professor had gone.

It seemed hours before any of the men standing there in the inky darkness dared loose his voice. Finally Fischer made bold enough to whisper:

"She is gone!"

For another interval there was no move by the others. At length Rice said:

"Turn on the light!"

Snyder felt for the button and the room was flooded with light. The faces of the living were scarcely less deathlike than that of the man lying on the table. There was but one thought in the minds of all. Under ordinary conditions and, if they had been given time for consideration, they would have dismissed it; but now they were incapable of

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thinking clearly. They must hide the body. Rice proclaimed it.

"It is only for the present," he said apologetically. The others silently agreed. The open doors of the cupboard suggested a temporary hiding place. They put the limp form of Professor Hopkins in the cupboard, locking the doors.

"Let's leave it there for now," said Rice, "until we can decide on some story as to how he met his death. It must never be known that we broke into his room through the skylight."

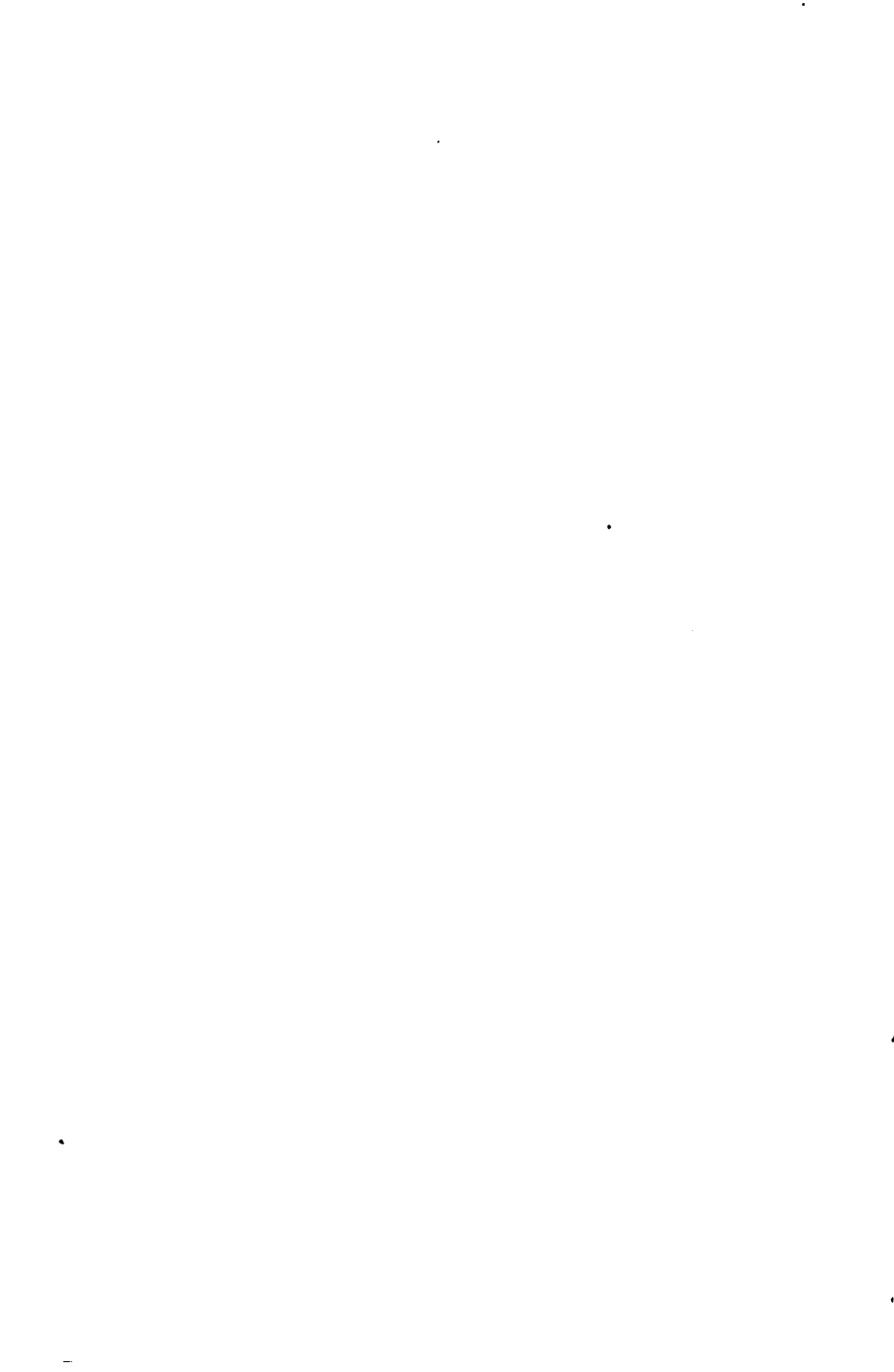
"No," said Snyder, "now that he is dead, for his sake——!"

"For our sakes!" grunted Fischer, harshly.

"This is no place for us to linger," said Rice. "Let us adjourn to Professor Snyder's room to talk it over."

Raising the ladder, Snyder went out the way they had all come in. The others unlocked the door and went out that way, Rice locking the door after them. In Snyder's room they gathered.

## **THE LIGHT IN THE CUPBOARD**



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE LIGHT IN THE CUPBOARD

"THERE is one matter of extreme importance," said Rice, when it seemed as though his companions were in a frame of mind to receive a suggestion calmly. "Was that Ernesta Frost who tried the door and called Professor Hopkins' name?"

"She said so," was Snyder's comment. "'It is I—Ernesta' were her words."

"Still——" began Rice; but Fischer interrupted, saying:

"Come, come, Rice, ve know dat you are mathematically inclined; very goot; it pays to insist on proof before arriving at conclusions, and ve vould haf been better off if ve had vaited. But let us not split straws. Dot vos Ernesta Frost for all practical purposes. Admitting dat, vat?"

"That being the case," went on Rice, ac-

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quiescent though not humbled, "and we saw her—or her shadow—with Hopkins in the laboratory only fifteen minutes previous to that, she could not have been very far away while—while matters were going on. We must in some way discover if she heard what transpired in the room, between us and Hopkins."

"He certainly spoke loud enough," said Snyder, shuddering at recollection of their victim's tirade.

"And yet," said Rice, "if she had heard him she would scarcely have gone away without making further inquiry than she did. I believe that she came back to ask him something which she had forgotten during the evening. Receiving no answer to her call, undoubtedly she returned home, to wait until to-morrow morning."

"Well?" asked Fischer, impatiently.

"A person hearing Hopkins' unjust denunciation of our purpose might naturally have thought that we were there to offer him violence. In such a case it would be most

difficult to arrange an explanation of his death. If, however, there was no witness to the scene, we have an opportunity to deny all knowledge of the affair; unless, of course, you gentlemen wish to have the actual truth become known!"

"No!" came in unison from Fischer, Gordon and Snyder. Rice could not help smiling at the rapidity with which his companions had changed from absolutely honourable men to persons of criminal bent. For it was a criminal bent that permitted them even to consider the expediency of trying to hide all connection with Hopkins' death. Had the case been put to them hypothetically, a day previous, there was not one who would not have counselled a clean breast with assurance that it always pays to tell the truth. Yet now, confronted with an actual condition, they were all for subterfuge in preference to straightforwardness.

The door of Snyder's office suddenly opened and as suddenly closed. The professors sprang to their feet, chilled with guilty ter-



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ror. It must be Ernesta Frost. Gordon ran to the door and opened it. The others heard a woman's voice say: "O, excuse me, Professor. I didn't know anyone was in there. I was just goin' to clean the room."

They gave a sigh of relief, for the speaker was nobody but Mrs. Harms, the scrub woman who customarily made her rounds of the building at this hour of the evening. But they were in no condition for a fresh shock, as could be seen by the way they trembled as they resumed their seats.

The scrub woman's presence in the building reminded them that quick action was necessary if they were to decide on a course of procedure that night. Rice, as usual, became spokesman for their sentiments.

"Gentlemen," he said, for the first time showing impatience, "we must arrive at a conclusion. What are we going to do and say in this matter? Come; has nobody a suggestion but me?"

"I have," said Fischer, "and it iss dis. Der body will haf to be discovered in the morn-

ing, anyway. Our presence in der building to-night is already known at least to der scrub woman. Dere is no vay we could demand silence on her part mitout arousing suspicion. Derefore, ve must act as follows:

"Dis is our story as ve vill tell it. Ve met in dis room to discuss matters connected mit der curriculum. Our business transacted, ve vere about to go to our homes ven ve heard der sound of a fall. Investigating, ve decided dat it came from the laboratory. Ve found der door of dot room open, and inside on der floor lay der body. Dat iss all."

"Whereupon," said Rice, falling into Fischer's manner of phraseology, "we sound the alarm, and our story is accepted."

"Dat iss it," said Fischer. Turning to Gordon and Snyder who remained silent, he asked, "Vat do you gentlemen tink of dat plan?"

Before either could reply an unearthly shriek rang through the building. The four professors were on their feet, stiff with ter-

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ror. Again the shriek rang out. It came unmistakably from the second floor. This time there could be but one interpretation. Ernesta Frost, returning again, had found Professor Hopkins' body, and was forestalling the conspirators in giving the alarm. At breathless speed the four men dashed from Snyder's room and up the stairs, the screams continuing all the while. They found the laboratory door, which they had locked, wide open. Rushing in they found, not Ernesta Frost, but Mrs. Harms, backed up against the wall, still uttering ear-piercing shrieks. Fischer flew at her, and clapped one hand over her mouth, while with the other he supported her for she would have fallen from fear.

A fresh terror seized the guilty four. What had the scrub woman seen? How would she accuse them? A cry from Gordon drew their gaze in the direction of the cupboard in the further end of the room.

IN THE GLOOM A STRANGE, PENETRATING, GHASTLY, WHITISH LIGHT EMANATED FROM

THE DOORS OF THE CUPBOARD IN WHICH THE BODY WAS CONCEALED!

"It's only some chemicals," faltered Rice to the scrub woman. "For heaven's sake be still!"

"Chemicals," she repeated. "I thought—I thought——"

"What?" demanded Gordon, half afraid to hear her answer.

"I—I don't know," said the woman. "But I wish Professor Hopkins wouldn't leave such things around to frighten a poor woman!"

"It's nothing," said Rice. "But as it seems to have unnerved you, perhaps you had better go. We will lock the door and see that everything is all right." He half pushed the woman from the room and escorted her downstairs. Only when he had heard her go out at the front door of the college did he return to the shuddering trio on the threshold of the laboratory.

He looked at the laboratory door once more without realising what he was doing, and then turned to gaze at the cupboard. The

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doors were still closed, disguising, but not concealing, their hideous secret. With trembling hands Rice opened the cupboard, swinging the doors apart with a sudden movement of his arm.

With exclamations of horror they sprang back. On the floor of the cupboard, in exactly the position in which they had left it, was the body of Professor Hopkins. It was luminous! From every part of it came a strong, clear light, so powerful that it had penetrated the thick doors of the closet; so dazzling that it almost blinded them as they stared stupefied.

And, as their eyes became more accustomed to looking at the figure, they discerned the face. It stared at them with wide-open fiery eyes, and through the parted lips seemed to come a steady glow of flame.

It was Fischer who first broke the silence. He said:

“My Gott! It would never do for der widow to look on her husband in such condition!”

## **THE PUZZLE OF THE DIAMOND**



## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PUZZLE OF THE DIAMOND

"HAS anybody seen Ernesta Frost tonight?"

Detective Sullivan, standing within earshot of a group of Graydon students in the village drugstore, strove to betray no interest in this question from one of the group; nevertheless, he listened attentively for the answer.

"Probably at home, working out some of old Hoppy's chemical experiments!" said another student.

"I don't see what Ernesta sees in that stuff," was the comment of a third, a girl. "She's either up at the laboratory or in her room working all the time."

"I guess Hoppy pays her for her work," suggested another.

"Perhaps she's trying to learn a lot so she can help Professor Gordon when they get



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married," said a young man; whereupon the girls tittered.

The group scattered and went in various directions. The detective followed two of its most loquacious members, hoping that he would hear more concerning Ernesta, but he was disappointed. The students turned into a dormitory at the foot of College Hill without further comment on the young woman.

But Sullivan had heard something that surprised him.

"When she and Professor Gordon are married," one of the students had said. So there was another complication, a love affair, possibly an engagement, between the girl and one of the faculty. Mrs. Hopkins had told him nothing of this; doubtless she did not know of it; but if it existed, what about the elopement with Professor Hopkins?

The detective had left the Hopkins house well pleased with himself at having so easily, by the mere turning of a photograph, discovered the identity of the girl. He had made a plausible excuse for a young woman, more

than ordinarily prepossessing, being attracted by a middle-aged college professor of high mental attainments. But now it seemed that Hopkins was not the only college professor to have attracted Ernesta. There was Gordon. Who was Gordon?

A matter easily discovered, thought Sullivan, as he mounted the elm-lined road leading to the college. Of course he could find that out in the morning, and, perhaps, if he were to approach Professor Gordon very carefully, he might learn of a quarrel between him and Ernesta. Perhaps the fact of her disappearance with Hopkins was the result of sudden pique.

"If the old fool was careless enough to leave that note where his wife could find it," he commented, "who knows but maybe he has left something around his laboratory that will give me a tip as to where they have gone! If the college isn't carefully guarded, and I can find his laboratory in the dark, I may be able to turn a little trick to-night."

As the detective arrived in front of the col-

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lege building he heard footsteps approaching from the opposite direction. They were accompanied by a muffled, rumbling sound for which he was at a loss to account. Hastily extinguishing his cigar, he slipped behind a tree to avoid being discovered and to await developments. The footsteps came nearer. Peering out from behind the tree he could see in the gloom the hazy outlines of four figures. One of them was trundling what the detective concluded to be a wheelbarrow.

"Labourers, I guess," said Sullivan to himself, "doing some work around the college. But why don't they have a light?" He strained his eyes and ears, but could see or hear nothing further. The figures approached nearer, and in another moment would have passed the tree behind which he stood. He drew back to permit them to pass without discovering him, resolving to follow them at a safe distance. But to his surprise they did not pass him, and the rumbling of the wheelbarrow suddenly ceased. Sullivan cautiously leaned out from his hiding-place. The men

were hidden in the shadow of the building, but he could hear them in whispered conference, though they were too far off for him to distinguish their words.

"Students up to some devilment, I bet," thought he, and was about to retreat down the hill lest they should find him lurking there and give the alarm. But he altered his mind when one of the group lighted a match and proceeded to ignite a cigar, for a moment throwing a red glare on the faces of all four men. Instead of students, they were full-grown, dignified-looking persons, at least one of them with grizzled hair and beard.

"Idiot!" one of them exclaimed, and the match was immediately extinguished; but the detective had already observed, not only that the men were not college students, but that they were in their shirt sleeves, and, judging by the fact that two of them were mopping their brows, had been engaged in some sort of manual labour. The wheelbarrow also indicated this.

One of them next wheeled the barrow

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around to the side of the building and then rejoined his companions. After this the four of them walked hastily in the direction of the village.

As they passed the tree that concealed Detective Sullivan he heard one of them say:

"We will separate when we get to the foot of the hill. It would not do for us to walk through the village together."

Quick to make up his mind, Sullivan decided that he would gain nothing by following one of the group, all of whom he could recognise if he could see them again. Better to inspect the wheelbarrow, whose location he thought he knew, and to see if the men had been up to any mischief around the college. So he waited until they had passed down the hill and out of hearing. Then reasonably sure that the coast was clear, he made his way to the corner of the building, where he expected to find the wheelbarrow.

It was there and in it lay a spade. He felt the surface of the barrow and found it dry

and clean, but the spade gave evidence to the touch of having been recently used.

"It's dirt!" said Sullivan, under his breath. "They've been burying something." He flashed his little pocket electric light on the spade, and was astonished to find that what he had taken for dirt was sawdust. "That's funny!" he said, and scraped off what sawdust adhered to the spade, perhaps half a handful, and put it in his pocket. Now he almost regretted not having followed the four men who had used the wheelbarrow. It was too late, however; the next best thing was to get into the college building.

"Anyway," he said to himself, by way of solace, "I'm not supposed to be runnin' down anything but Hopkins!"

He fully expected to find the front door of the college building locked, and was prepared to climb in a window; but the door swung obligingly open at his first touch. He stepped carefully inside, and waited, the condition of the door making him afraid that there might be a night watchman on hand.

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Hearing nothing, he located the stairs and, in the darkness, felt his way to the door of the laboratory. Flashing his light once more, his eye caught a notice of some sort pinned to the laboratory door. At the risk of his light attracting attention, he examined the note carefully. It said:

“PROFESSOR HOPKINS HAS BEEN CALLED OUT OF TOWN UNEXPECTEDLY.”

Habit, chance or good luck led him to investigate more fully. He passed his finger lightly over the writing. The ink was still damp, showing that the notice could not have been written more than a few minutes ago.

“That’s queer, mighty queer!” said Sullivan to himself. “Whoever put that there must have written it and stuck it up while those four men were right around here somewhere. If Hopkins himself wrote it—and very likely he did—he must have been in the building—he may be in the building now! Or else he has been, inside of a mighty few minutes! I’ll see!”

He put out his light again and stooped to look through the keyhole of the laboratory door, to discover if there were a light in the room. It was dark. He opened the door cautiously. He wouldn't have been at all surprised to have found Professor Hopkins there, but a survey of the room, after he had pulled down the inside curtains, thus shutting in all light from his little "flash," convinced him that he was alone.

The cupboard came within range of his diminutive searchlight. The doors were open, and on the upper shelf he saw what he instantly recognised as the black bag of which Mrs. Hopkins had spoken. He emptied its contents unceremoniously on the floor. Quickly he ran through the crumpled papers, and thrust them in his pocket for future reference. None of them looked at all suspicious except the note from Ernesta, the contents of which Mrs. Hopkins had retailed to him. This he added to his collection, and put the bag back in its place.

"She said he always carried this with him



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wherever he went," said Sullivan, as he put the bag on the shelf in the cupboard. "Well, this is one time he didn't! Hello! What's this?"

It was a large notebook lying beside the bag. As he turned its pages, he saw that it was a sort of diary kept by Professor Hopkins, and to his surprise the writing in it was not at all like that of the note on the laboratory door.

"Aha!" said Sullivan, "if Hopkins didn't write that note, he must have told somebody he was going away, and got them to do it for him! Now, who?"

He was about to close the notebook when his eye suddenly caught the last entry made in it:

"MONDAY, MAY 18—AT LAST!"

"Why, that's to-day!" exclaimed the detective aloud. Then, eagerly, he ran back over the preceding pages for some clue to this last remark. He found it entered on the Friday previous:

"Ernesta is ready to go," was the sentence.

Sullivan continued his search, and on a page still further back he found:

"Everything is working out satisfactorily. Imagine that my fears regarding Gordon were groundless. He knows nothing, I am sure."

Sullivan was jubilant. "I guess Mrs. Hopkins was right," he said to himself. "He was certainly planning to run away with the girl, and was afraid Professor Gordon smelled a rat. Cagey old scoundrel, all right! But he'll have to be cagier than that to keep me from landing him!"

He gave the laboratory a thorough overhauling in search of anything else that might indicate where Ernesta and the professor had gone; but he found absolutely nothing, and decided, finally, that he might as well go back to the hotel and get a night's rest, after tabulating his work for the evening.

As he let himself out of the college door he was reminded of the wheelbarrow incident. Grown bolder now, he did not hesitate to examine the ground with his pocket-light, and was able to see the tracks made by the barrow

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and the four men, clearly. He gathered that the men had taken the wheelbarrow from its place at the side of the building, and brought it to the foot of the steps, where, very likely, they had put something heavy in it; for, while the tracks from the barrow's resting place to the steps were scarcely discernible, where they turned to the left they cut deep into the soft ground.

What had these men, at this hour of the night, been doing?

"Anything's a detective's business," said Sullivan to himself. "I might as well follow the tracks and see what they lead to."

With his pocket-lamp picking out the direction the wheelbarrow had taken, Sullivan investigated. From close observation of the footsteps he decided that one man had walked ahead, one wheeled the barrow and the other two walked on either side to steady it.

"Must have been something pretty heavy!" he commented. "If old Hopkins had been murdered, now, instead of skipping out, I could easily believe that these were the four

## PUZZLE OF THE DIAMOND 93

murderers carrying the body away to bury it. I'm almost sorry this ain't a murder; this would be such a good start for it!"

He followed the tracks along the road that led away from the village. Presently they turned into a wood-covered path where all trace of them was lost. Sullivan stumbled on along this path until it brought him into a dense thicket. His little light, to make things worse, went out, the battery having become exhausted. He tripped on a projecting root and nearly fell. Now he decided that it was useless to try to follow the trail further, and started to retrace his steps.

Suddenly he stopped, and a smothered exclamation escaped him. The dense darkness ahead was pierced by a tiny needle of light. He thought that it came from behind him, and turned, with his arm raised to ward off any sudden blow that might be struck him over his shoulder. There was nobody there. He smiled:

"My pocket-flash must have come to life again!" he said; but it was not that. The

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light came from the big diamond he wore in his tie. Like a miniature beacon this jewel—a present from a grateful client—cast a glaring shaft of light far into the darkness. It was a light more brilliant than any the detective had seen before. It seemed to go through things, instead of illuminating objects with which it came in contact. It was, in short, a ghostly light.

An uncanny feeling came over Sullivan. He placed his hand over the diamond, but the light came through his fingers, only now, instead of pointing out in a single ray, it was diffused. He could almost feel it burn his fingers, and withdrew them hurriedly. Rushing for the open road, he lost the path and stumbled blindly through the thicket, finally emerging a hundred yards from where he had entered.

As he came into the open, the light of the diamond seemed gradually to fade. By the time he had reached the hotel it had entirely disappeared.

For an hour after he went to his room he

sat staring at the jewel under the light of the lamp. It was now lustreless.

“It beats me!” was Sullivan’s comment.  
“It beats me, if I really saw it, and I’ll swear I did!”



## **THE PROBLEM OF THE FOUR**





## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE PROBLEM OF THE FOUR

THE four men whose strange actions had led the detective to follow the trail of the wheelbarrow with such surprising results, were Professors Snyder, Rice, Gordon and Fischer.

Their course of procedure after the scrub-woman's shrieks had drawn them in terror to the laboratory to find Hopkins' body in its terrible, luminous condition, had been erratic, to say the least, and not at all the line of action ordinarily followed by a quartette of deliberate college professors.

But it must be remembered that their nerves were on the ragged edge, so, when they reassembled in Snyder's room, there was not one among them capable of careful reasoning.

For several minutes they were silent; Snyder with a hopeless stare; Rice with knitted

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brows, striving to collect his shattered wits sufficiently to form the first equation necessary to the solution of the problem; Gordon shaken by many disquieting suspicions, and Fischer white with rage at himself and the others who had drawn him into this situation. On one point their minds were working in concert. It would never do to let Mrs. Hopkins find her husband's body in its present condition.

Rice, as usual, took the lead. Turning suddenly to his silent confreres, he demanded:

"Well, are you going to sit here all night like a trio of sphinxes? Haven't any of you a suggestion? What's going to be done?"

"I don't know," faltered the luckless Snyder, whose unfortunate spying had caused the whole affair. "Didn't Dr. Fischer suggest some sort of story we were to tell to account for Professor Hopkins' untimely death?"

"No story would go about a body like dot von," said Fischer. "We could not explain it."

"Dr. Fischer is quite right," said Rice. "How could we account for the luminosity of the body? We could not, and an investigation would naturally follow. Our presence in the building at this hour—and we have yet to explain it at our homes—is known to the scrub woman. Perhaps our trip over the roof and down the skylight would come out. Do you see the position in which we would find ourselves? No, gentlemen, the body must not be found in the college building."

This startling suggestion caused a commotion.

"I don't understand," said Gordon.

"It's plain enough," said Rice. "The scrub woman has seen the light that emanates, I don't profess to know why, from Professor Hopkins' body. If it comes out that the body was in the cupboard, at the time, and that we tried to deceive the scrub woman, won't they want to know what our reasons were? And if they do, who's going to give them a satisfactory explanation?"

"Der only course," said Fischer, "is vat

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Rice suggests. Get der body out of der building first, und hide it until der peculiar light has left it—if it should leave it at all. After dat—vell, ve cannot see vat vill happen, but it vill be better for us, anyway.”

“Where shall we hide it?” asked Snyder.

“There is the woods back of the college,” said Rice.

They were ready to accept any suggestion now. They rose, when Rice rose, and left Snyder’s room. Rice led the procession toward the laboratory once more. With trembling hands he unlocked the door and let them in, forgetting to fasten the lock after them. The whole room was now completely filled with the whitish glare. The body had evidently grown even more luminous, for the cupboard doors glowed as if there was a raging fire behind them and they were of translucent glass instead of thick oak.

When exposed to their view Hopkins’ whole body looked like a human jack-o’lantern. They recoiled from it in horror.

“You see,” said Rice, “it’s growing worse.

## PROBLEM OF THE FOUR 103

It may set fire to the college. It may—who knows what it may do? We must lose no time. But how shall we get it away?"

"There is a wheelbarrow outside," said Gordon. "The gardener left it there to-day."

"Get it," said Rice, and Gordon went to do so.

"And now," said Rice, with grim desperation, "we will carry it down to the front door."

"Like—like that?" stammered Gordon.

"No," said Fischer, "we must rap it up in something."

Rice came to the rescue. In a closet in the inner laboratory he found several large sheets of blue-print paper. With these they made an ungainly bundle of Professor Hopkins, and tied him with strings. Sheet after sheet they wrapped about the body, trying to shut in all traces of the radiance, but it insisted on stealing out between cracks and folds in the paper.

"That's the best we can do," said Rice, at last. "Now come."

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They lifted it carefully and carried it down to the waiting vehicle. The curious light still streamed from the bundle, making a nimbus easily perceptible several yards away. In despair Rice gazed on the thing as it lay in the wheelbarrow, and pulled his coat off, which he threw over the burden. The others followed his example. Then Snyder grasped the handles of the wheelbarrow and they started, Rice ahead and Gordon and Fischer walking on either side to steady the barrow.

With a feeling of great relief they ended the short journey in the open and found themselves at the entrance of the woods. Not till they had reached this point did Snyder dare rest his limp muscles. He set the barrow down and stopped to take breath.

"Where shall we bury it?" whispered he.

"Bury it! Preposterous!" said Rice. "A suicide does not attend to his own interment! We must hide it."

"I know der place," said Fischer. "Der old ice-house by Brindler's pond."

They were all familiar with the spot. The

## PROBLEM OF THE FOUR 105

ice-house, now in a dilapidated state after many years of disuse, reposed on the edge of a pond at the other end of the little patch of woods. The path could be found only by one familiar with it. Fischer stumbled once or twice after they had resumed their march, and Gordon took the lead. He sighed. Memories connected with this path, locally known as "Lovers' Walk," crowded his thoughts and gave him exquisite agony of mind.

The ice-house reached, they lifted their burden from the wheelbarrow and carried it inside. Rice lit a match to help them see the interior of the place, and before it had died out they had deposited the bundle in a corner of the building, on the floor just over the edge of the pond. They heaped some boards which they found on the floor over it, and with a spade threw some loose sawdust on the heap.

On the way back to the college, Rice said:

"That's done. Now, how long before we dare allow the body to be discovered? I mean we don't want anybody to find it until the radiance has left it. Therefore, we must hold



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off any possible search for at least twenty-four hours."

"How?" demanded Snyder quickly. "Hopkins will be missing in the morning, won't he?"

"He iss missing to-night," said Fischer. "His wife is missing him, all right!"

"My plan is this," said Rice. "We must let it be thought that Hopkins has gone away. Suppose we put a note on his laboratory door, saying that he has been called away unexpectedly."

"I'll write that," said Snyder, taking a fountain pen and a sheet of paper from his pocket. Rice held a match and Snyder wrote the note which he pinned to the door of the laboratory, running ahead of the others and rejoining them as they came back to the building.

As they passed the corner of the building Rice said:

"What's that rattling in the wheelbarrow?"

"The spade," said Gordon.

## PROBLEM OF THE FOUR 107

"Spade!" repeated Rice. "We had no spade."

"Snyder found one in the ice-house and used it to cover the bundle with sawdust," explained Gordon.

"Der idiot!" cried Fischer under his breath, and, in a fit of carelessness, he lighted the cigar. Rice ordered that he extinguish the match, and cautioned silence, fancying that he heard the sound of a twig being cracked underfoot, among the trees. They listened, but heard nothing further, and Gordon replaced the wheelbarrow, leaving the spade in it. Nobody, thought Rice, would connect Hopkins' disappearance with the wheelbarrow, anyway.

Then, after hurriedly promising each other to say nothing of the evening's affair, they departed for home.

As Gordon lighted the lamp in his modest room, his eye fell upon an envelope on the dressing case. His heart leaped at sight of the familiar writing, and he tore the envelope open excitedly. A note enclosed read:

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*"George:*

"I have had to leave town suddenly. Make no attempt to find me, and do not let them know that you were surprised at my going. It is for your sake as well as mine. Trust me and believe in me.

"Yours ever,

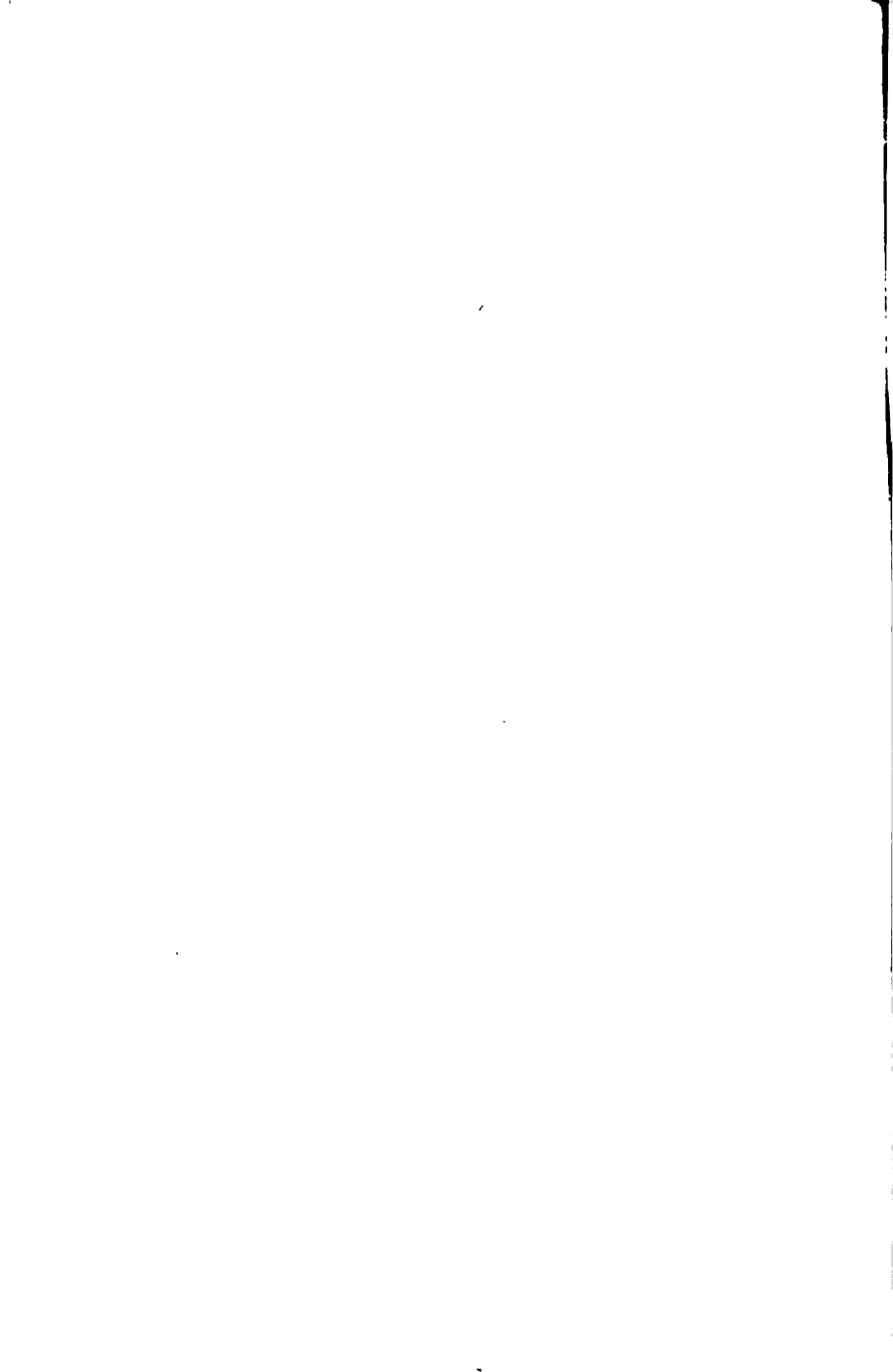
"ERNESTA.

"Monday evening, eight o'clock."

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## THE ROAD TO THE STATION





## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE ROAD TO THE STATION

"GONE!" muttered Gordon, as he stood gazing at the note which he held in his trembling hands. "For my sake! What can it mean? Our quarrel because I chided her for spending so much time in Hopkins' laboratory? Because I showed that I was jealous? No, it could scarcely be that." He paused and looked again at the note. Suddenly he gasped. "'For your sake!' Great God! She knows! She saw!"

The horrid thought flashed through his mind that Ernesta, at the moment of returning to the laboratory and calling Professor Hopkins' name, had discovered the presence of Gordon and his associates in the room. Perhaps even she had looked through the key-hole, and had seen them standing guard over the body of their victim. But in that case,

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why should she have run away? In a sudden frenzy of fear? To avoid giving evidence against them—or (he thought with a tinge of conceit), against him alone? It must be something of that sort, else why so sudden and hasty a departure, in so mysterious a manner?

“God bless her if it is as I think,” said Gordon to himself. “But she shan’t go if I can catch her!”

He blew out the lamp and crept silently down the stairs and out into the night, with the girl’s note still clutched in his fingers.

A deep love existed for Ernesta Frost on the part of this young scholar, whose asceticism had never before permitted an affair of the heart to interfere with the prosy studiousness of his career. Almost from his first sight of Ernesta, nearly four years since, he had been forced to admit to himself a peculiar interest in the girl, so different from the feeling awakened in him by any other woman.

To-night he could see her as she was then, a fresh, tall girlish figure, modest and beauti-

ful, earnest and studious. He could recall the strange satisfaction he had felt when, one afternoon after the dismissal of his class in philosophy, she had remained to ask him questions concerning some point which she had not quite understood. He had walked home with her—as he had often walked with other pupils, rather than let them delay him longer in the college building, and he could remember how, when in the midst of his explanation of the subject in hand, he had suddenly looked at her and caught her surveying him with those great, lustrous blue eyes, he had averted his head with a feeling of embarrassment at her scrutiny.

Then came Albert Rassignol! Why the personality of this young student from Paris should obtrude itself upon Gordon's mental vision to-night, when he had been enabled to blot it out for months past, can be explained only by the fact that he was searching every cell of his memory for some fact to account for Ernesta's sudden disappearance, and that Rassignol's sojourn at Graydon represented



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a period fraught with painful recollections for the young professor in the development of his love for Ernesta.

Gordon hurried his steps as he remembered Rassignol; remembered how he had first noticed what he interpreted as an attachment between him and Ernesta; how he had found them, on more than one occasion, in Hopkins' laboratory, so deeply engrossed in some chemical problem as to be wholly unaware of his presence till he had made it known; how happy he, Gordon, had been when Rassignol, having completed the special course of studies under Hopkins, which he had come all the way from Paris to pursue, had returned to France.

By this time, Gordon remembered, his analytical mind had diagnosed his own attitude toward Ernesta as affection. The realisation of this was a shock to him, a shock such as might come to a man who had been brought up to believe that his legs were merely ornamental appendages, and suddenly discovered that they could be used for locomotion. When this shock had worn off, however, he would

have been happy but for Rassignol's presence; when the Frenchman went he was divinely happy in a solitary, lonely way, for he had no courage with which to make a declaration of his passion to Ernesta.

She, however, was not wanting in that intuition which is every woman's choicest attribute, and but for which it is doubtful if Gordon's love would ever have resulted in more than sighing and dreaming of her.

In her maidenly way Ernesta had shown the bashful young scholar that his affection was not unrequited. Little by little she drew him out, to his intense joy. This joy, however, was coupled with disappointment that this woman, whom he regarded as the most perfect of her sex, should prove so fickle as to forget Rassignol—whom he still considered to have had her affections while he remained at Graydon. Self-satisfaction took the place of this unpleasant feeling at last, and Gordon, when he became sure that Ernesta cared for him, was supremely happy. He made his declaration finally and was accepted.

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Poverty stood in the way of an immediate marriage, and though Gordon had some small property in Boston real estate, they were waiting for his position with regard to salary to be bettered before they should wed.

Their courtship and betrothal had been a delightful period in their happy, simple way; Gordon devoting himself with more assiduity to his studies than ever in order to hasten the time of his promotion; Ernesta saving by assisting Professor Hopkins in his laboratory. This effort on her part, however, had been productive of the only quarrels or disagreements which she and Gordon had had. And these were only recent. Ernesta's growing interest in Professor Hopkins' work, her evenings spent either in the laboratory with the savant or alone in her room working out his problems after hours, had finally filled her lover with a feeling of jealousy. She had tried in vain to assure him that he was foolish; he was not so certain of his own charms as not to fear that Hopkins might have others which had attracted Ernesta. He pouted like a

child, unable to bring his philosophy to aid him. Ernesta and he had had many disputes over the matter, and once, in a burst of high spirits, the girl had flung his engagement ring in Gordon's face, telling him that she did not care to have a love which doubted her so.

But this quarrel had been made up, and until within a few days of this fateful night Ernesta and Gordon had been happy, the girl extremely so, he remembered now. So, as he hurried along the dark road, he could come to no conclusion concerning her departure from Graydon other than that she had been a witness to the occurrence in the laboratory.

"I'll find her, and make her stay," he muttered, "she shall not go without knowing the truth about it. God! perhaps she thinks that I am a murderer!"

To reach Ernesta's boarding-house it was necessary for Gordon to pass the hotel, which, but for a few lights, was dark for the night. A kerosene lamp on a post in the road bore the title of the little inn on its glass, and shed a few rays on the road. These fell on Gor-

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don's face, and to a man standing at the window of a room on the second floor in deep thought, the picture was so interesting as to make him leap backward in surprise.

It was Detective Sullivan, who had just reached his room after the strange affair of the diamond. He recognised Gordon as one of the four men whom he had seen with the wheelbarrow, at the college buildings, and he could not help but observe, even in the dull glow of the lamp outside, the tense expression on the young scholar's white face.

"There's something serious the matter with that fellow!" exclaimed the detective, and catching up his hat, he hurried down the stairs.

When Gordon, unaware, of course, that he was being followed, reached Ernesta's house, a few rods further on, his purpose was to ring the bell and inquire for her. Not until he reached the gate did he realise what an odd thing this would be to do so late of the evening, and then he paused irresolutely. Not twenty yards behind him, dodging from one

to another of the elms lining the street, was Detective Sullivan, peering from the seclusion of his tree trunk whenever he thought it was safe, retreating into the shadows at the slightest movement on Gordon's part. He heard Gordon say:

"What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" and saw him gaze earnestly at the second window, as he stood clutching the fence.

"What's he up to? Who's he spotting?" thought the detective.

Suddenly Gordon turned and retraced his steps, passing on the other side of the tree behind which Sullivan was concealed. As he passed the detective heard him muttering again:

"Ernesta! O, my Ernesta!"

"It's Gordon!" flashed through Sullivan's mind, as he recalled the statement by the student in the drugstore regarding the attachment of the young professor and the mysterious Frost girl. Gordon went rapidly down the street, and Sullivan, intent on keeping him in sight, abandoned his tree-dodging and

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followed openly. There was no danger, apparently, of the pursued discovering the detective, for the young professor seemed to have but one thought, to arrive wherever he was going as soon as his steps would carry him. As for the pedestrians, it was ten o'clock, and all Graydon was tucked in at that hour.

At the foot of the main street was the railroad station, and Sullivan decided that Gordon was aiming for that.

"What's he going to the station for?" he asked himself. "The last train left at eight o'clock!" But the station was Gordon's goal, and from behind a pile of freight Sullivan was soon watching him in conversation with the night watchman, the sole occupant of the lightless place, and their words were easily distinguishable.

"Why, hello, Professor Gordon," said the watchman. "What you doin' out at such an hour?"

"Nothing,—er—nothing," replied Gordon, so plainly at a loss for what to say that Sul-

livan wondered at the watchman's apparent lack of suspicion. "Just taking a walk."

"Fine night, Professor," said the watchman.

"Very," said Gordon. "By the way, was there anyone—I mean, did you have any passengers on the last train out to-night?"

"The eight o'clock? No, Professor, there was only one."

"One!" Sullivan could plainly detect the excitement in Gordon's tone. "Was she——"

"Twasn't a she," laughed the watchman. "It was Dr. Whittridge; he went over to Hardwick on a case. Why, was you expectin' anybody to go away?"

"No," said Gordon, "nobody." Then a pause, as though he were considering how to end the conversation. "Good-night," he said, quickly, and hurried up the street.

Sullivan had not been expecting so rapid a movement on the young professor's part. Gordon came by the pile of freight that only half concealed the detective before he could draw back into the shadow. On seeing Sulli-



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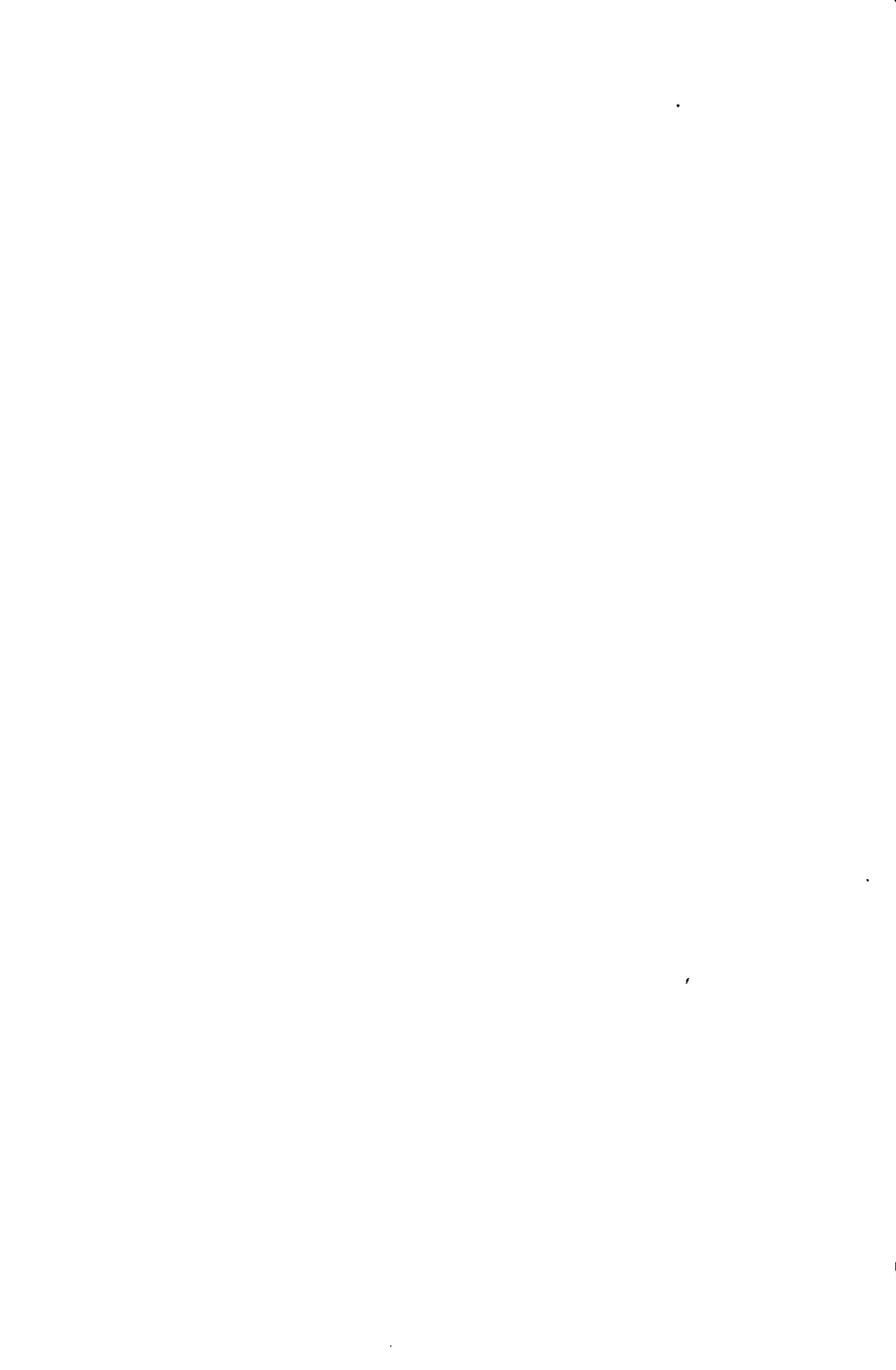
van lurking there, he stopped and looked full at him. Unfortunately for the detective the sole street lamp within thirty yards was not more than twenty feet from him and his face could be plainly seen by the surprised Gordon, who took a long look at him. Sullivan tried to look unconcerned.

"Good-evening," he said, "got a match? I was tryin' to get a light in here, but the wind blew out my last one."

"Wind?" said Gordon, suspiciously. The night was absolutely zephyrless. Then he went on.

Sullivan watched him out of sight, then returned to his hotel, slightly crestfallen.

**THE BANK EPISODE**



## CHAPTER NINE

### THE BANK EPISODE

"I AM sorry, but this check will overdraw your husband's account!"

Mrs. Hopkins, standing at the window in the Graydon Bank, felt herself turn to stone. She could not move, she could not cry out. She could merely look appealingly, helplessly, dumbly, at the man behind the window.

"There is only \$16.53 to his credit," said Mr. Fox, the cashier. "Only \$16.53."

It was shortly after nine o'clock, Tuesday morning. Mrs. Hopkins had sent the children early to school, and, without waiting to attend to her household duties, had rushed to the bank to draw the money necessary to secure Detective Sullivan's services. She had written the check and presented it at the window, accompanying its offering with a smile that was meant to be pleasant and cordial.

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She did not want anyone to guess the torture that was gnawing at her heart and had kept her sleepless through the long night. The cashier—who acted in many capacities in the little bank—examined the check more carefully, Mrs. Hopkins thought, than was usual; then, instead of paying it at once, he went into the private office, where he remained several minutes. On emerging he came toward the window diffidently, apologetically, making the statement that froze every drop of blood in the woman's body. Receiving no answer, he supplemented his remark with a second. Then Mrs. Hopkins, by a superhuman effort, managed to gasp:

“Only \$16.53! Why, Mr. Fox, there must be some mistake. There must be! We—he had over five thousand dollars here!”

The cashier smiled pityingly. He knew something was wrong.

“Your husband drew exactly five thousand dollars by check, yesterday morning,” he said.

“Five thousand dollars!” Mrs. Hopkins wailed the words, as she realised it all. Not

satisfied with abandoning her and her children, the scoundrel had taken their savings of years, their all, leaving her to face poverty. She turned upon the cashier.

"Oh! Oh!" she cried. "He drew it, and you let him draw it! You had no right to do it. Why did you? It was my money! My money, saved by pinching and denying! You had no right!"

"Excuse me," said the old man, "the money was in your husband's name, and under the laws he had a right to draw it whenever he pleased."

"But you must have known——" Mrs. Hopkins could go no further. She realised that she would be showing her hand. This she resolved not to do under any circumstances. She must have the money with which to pay Sullivan. She turned to the cashier again, endeavouring to be calm.

"I did not know," she said, "that Professor Hopkins contemplated drawing quite so much money. He—he was unexpectedly called away. I—I must have a hundred dol-

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lars to-day—at once. Is there not some way it could be arranged?"

"I wonder what she wants the money for?" thought Mr. Fox, but seeing her troubled face, he decided not to ask her.

"If you really must have it," he said, "I guess we can arrange it. The professor's salary is always paid on the twentieth. If you will promise to deposit that promptly I guess we can let you have this hundred dollars."

Mrs. Hopkins promised blindly. She must pay the detective now. The necessity was more urgent than ever. So she took the bills Mr. Fox handed her, thrust them into her purse, and hurried home.

She had scarcely closed the door of her house behind her when she heard a ring at the bell. It must be the detective. She ran to open the door, but through the side lights in the hall she saw that it was not Sullivan, but a student. What could he want? Her curiosity almost impelled her to let him in, but she hesitated. He might, of course, have some word from her husband; but it could

be nothing of importance. Her vanished spouse surely would not send her any clue to his whereabouts. Besides, she feared that she could not maintain composure before a stranger, and she did not wish to betray her feelings again, as she had at the bank. No; he could ring. So, in response to the student's repeated pulls at the bell, she kept silence, and finally had the satisfaction of seeing him go away.

Detective Sullivan, in the meantime, was busy. He rose early, and, acting on the clue furnished him by Gordon's late visit to the railroad station, set about discovering what other means of getting out of Graydon there might be, other than the railroad. This had been his intention from the beginning, as he realised that so prominent a person as Professor Hopkins would not, if he wished to cover his tracks, try to leave town from so public a place as the railroad station, if there were any other way of disappearing.

New England is a network of trolley lines. Sullivan found that, while no street car line



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ran directly through Graydon, a main line was only two miles distant. By walking that far anyone could take the trolley to one of half a dozen towns where railroad connection could be made for Boston and other cities. If, therefore, Ernesta Frost and Hopkins were in Graydon so late the preceding day as to make Gordon suspect that they had not gone by the last train, it was most likely that they had walked to the trolley line, under cover of darkness, and thus thrown suspicion off their movements.

As to the freshly written note which the detective had discovered on the laboratory door, the night before, if it were not written by Hopkins, somebody must have known that he was going. To find out who wrote the note was, then, the first work for him to do.

When he reached the college building he noted, with a feeling of satisfaction, that the wheelbarrow and spade were just where he had seen the four men leave them. He would have another look at the wheelbarrow, and he went toward it. He stood bending carelessly

over it, when a shadow fell across his shoulder. Looking up suddenly he saw the face of Dr. Fischer, for a second, peering out of a classroom window just overhead. The face was frightened, thought Sullivan, and he remembered it as one of those that he had seen, the night previous, at the moment the match was lighted.

"There's something mighty funny about this business," said the detective to himself. "If it wasn't a sure enough elopement I might be inclined to think—anything!"

He noted that the wheelbarrow bore a mark, "Graydon College," branded on the side. On the spade there was no mark.

"I'll remember that," he said to himself. "In fact, I guess it'll pay to remember anything I see or hear around here!"

It was after nine o'clock; the Dean had dispersed the crowd about the laboratory door and sent messengers to Mrs. Hopkins and Ernesta Frost's house. The college offered an appearance of its usual calm, no matter what might be going on beneath the surface. De-

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tective Sullivan encountered nobody but a few students as he went into the building and up the stairs to the laboratory. Before the door stood a short, oldish man, critically examining the note which was still pinned to the door. Sullivan stepped up behind him and said:

“I beg your pardon, sir; but are you Professor Hopkins?”

Sullivan knew that the man was not Hopkins, and accosted him in this way merely to make an excuse for his presence near the laboratory. Then ensued his conversation with the Dean, and the latter's gracious effort to direct him to Professor Snyder's room. This was the moment for action. Sullivan slyly took the note from the door, thanked the Dean for his kindness and hurried out of the building.

He made his way directly to Mrs. Hopkins' house and was soon seated beside her in the parlour.

“Have you caught them?” she demanded of him.

"Not quite," said he, "but I am on their track. They cannot escape. I have strong clues. Now, before I go any further, have you——"

"I have," said Mrs. Hopkins, thrusting the money which she had drawn from the bank into his hand, "and what do you think?"

Whereupon she poured into the detective's astonished ears the story of Professor Hopkins' withdrawal of the family funds from the Graydon Bank.

"The scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "I beg your pardon, ma'am, for speaking of your husband that way; but he is. Any man that would do that would—and you say that this hundred dollars is your last cent?"

"Worse than that," sobbed Mrs. Hopkins. "It is drawn against his monthly salary, not yet received, and that is only \$150."

"Here, ma'am," said Sullivan, putting the money on the parlour table. "Take this. You pay me when the case is done, an' I've caught him and made him give you back the money he's stolen. Yes, stolen!" He would

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not listen to the woman's protestations that she must pay, to keep her word. Closing the incident he continued, suddenly confronting her with the note which he had plucked from the laboratory door:

"Look at this now, and tell me, do you know whose writing it is?"

Mrs. Hopkins brushed the tears away from her eyes and looked at the note. As she read it she was almost overcome. She did not for the moment notice that the handwriting was not that of her husband, and took it to be a word from him. Not a word to her, but a word—it was a solace, no matter what she might think of him. The detective continued:

"Don't get excited, ma'am. It isn't from your husband, is it?"

"No," said Mrs. Hopkins, "it is not his writing. It is——"

"Whose?"

"I don't——"

"Think! Think of all the college professors! Is it Gordon's?"

"Wait a moment," said Mrs. Hopkins. She

went to a table, from a drawer in which she took out an autograph album. In it were the names of the faculty, with expressions of sentiment from most of them. She handed it to the detective, who turned the pages rapidly. When he came to the page on which Snyder had written he gave a start.

"That's the one," he said. "Look for yourself!"

"I should think so," said Mrs. Hopkins. "What does that mean?"

"Simply that Professor Snyder was asked by your husband to put this note on his laboratory door, which he did as late as half past nine last night."

"Then Professor Snyder——"

"Can put us right! And leave it to me, ma'am, he's got to."



# **PROFESSOR SNYDER'S FALSEHOOD**





## CHAPTER TEN

### PROFESSOR SNYDER'S FALSEHOOD

TUESDAY proved a day of unspeakable torture for Messrs. Rice, Snyder, Fischer and Gordon. They crept to the college guiltily. Snyder was the first to arrive, and as he entered the building he noted a general excitement. Instinct told him it had to do with the events of the previous night, and curiosity—the curiosity that draws the murderer back to the scene of his crime—forced him to mount the stairs to the second story. He saw the crowd around the laboratory and his heart sank. What had they discovered? Learning, however, that they knew nothing further than they could read in the note which he had written and pinned to the door, he was relieved, and started down to his classroom, when the Dean asked him if he knew where Professor Hopkins had gone. Snyder's reply was a denial.

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Fischer and Rice met in the hall. They, too, became aware of the air of unrest and mystery, and stopped at the laboratory to see what it was. When the Dean made his inquiry of them they shook their heads and looked at each other. Then they went to their rooms.

As Fischer, deeply troubled, prepared for the day's work, he happened to glance out of the window. They had left the wheelbarrow directly beneath it. To his dismay he saw a man, a stranger, looking critically into the barrow as though he suspected something. The man raised his head and saw Fischer. The latter turned crimson and drew back from the window. What did all this mean? He hurried to Rice's room to tell him of the occurrence, and transferred part of his awful burden of fear to that gentleman.

Gordon arrived in a daze. When the Dean asked him if he could explain Hopkins' note he blushed, stammered, and became inextricably confused. He realised what a botch of it he had made by suggesting that the Dean

should ask Rice or Fischer about it. But it was too late to retract.

The students' gossip concerning both Hopkins and Ernesta drove him nearly distracted during the day. He could hardly resist the temptation, when he heard their names coupled, to cry out:

"It's a lie! A miserable lie! They have not eloped!" But he realised that he must say nothing.

For the Dean, also, the day was proving interesting. He questioned the messenger who brought him the startling news of Ernesta Frost's disappearance over and over again, but could learn nothing more. Cautioning him to keep the knowledge of the girl's sudden disappearance from the students as long as possible, the Dean sent him away and began to think. He was not such a blind old fool as they thought. He had noticed the students' comments at the laboratory door. He had long been aware of the evenings that Hopkins was spending in his laboratory with Ernesta as his assistant, and had mentally

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questioned the expediency of allowing such a thing to continue. Not that he had any suspicions—merely that the college could not afford the slightest possibility of a scandal.

Was this simultaneous disappearance of Hopkins and the senior the climax of these evenings? Certainly it looked mysterious.

“Moreover,” soliloquised the Dean, “if there’s no mystery about it, why did Snyder write that note and tell me nothing about it? Why did Rice and Fischer deny that they knew anything about Hopkins, and why did Gordon say that he thought they did? And, what became of the note, anyway?”

As if in answer to this question, there was a knock at his door and the Dean called “Come in!” There entered Detective Sullivan, or, as the Dean knew him, the book agent.

“Dean Quimby, I believe?” was his greeting.

“Yes,” said the Dean brusquely, for he was not pleasantly inclined toward this smooth, quiet stranger who, he believed, had stolen

the bit of evidence from the door of the laboratory. "That's my name. Who are you?"

"My name is Sullivan," said the detective, "and I have come to see you about Professor Hopkins."

"Oh, you have!" said the Dean. "Well, Mr. Sullivan, I do not know what Professor Hopkins is to you, and before I have any conversation with you concerning him, I would like to ask what you did with the note—Oh!"

For with a smile, Detective Sullivan was holding the bit of paper out to the Dean, who took it.

"Professor Hopkins' note!" he exclaimed. Sullivan corrected him, saying:

"Professor Snyder's note, I guess you mean, sir."

"How did you know that?" asked the Dean, scowling.

"It's my business to find out," said Sullivan. "I am a detective, and now, if you can assure me that we are absolutely alone, I would like to ask you a few questions and tell you a few things."

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"You may go ahead," said the Dean. "But first of all, may I ask if you have any—suspicions regarding the mysterious disappearance of Professor Hopkins?"

"I'm glad, sir," said Sullivan, "that you are willing to admit that there is something mysterious about it. As to my knowing or suspecting anything about him, well, I do suspect a few things. However, I didn't want to say or do anything impulsive. I'd much rather hear what you think about it, first.

The Dean started to speak, then stopped, hesitatingly. Should he confide in this stranger? Sullivan seemed to read his doubt, and said:

"You don't need to tell me anything unless you want to. But I may tell you that I'm on this case in the service of Mrs. Hopkins, and intend pushing it to the end. So, any help you can give me will be better for all concerned, I believe."

"You say that Mrs. Hopkins has engaged you to trace her husband?" asked the Dean,

greatly surprised. "When did she do this, may I ask?"

"Yesterday, by telegraph," said Sullivan.

"Yesterday! Why, Professor Hopkins——"

"Did not disappear until last night? That is right, sir. But Mrs. Hopkins evidently knew that he was going. In fact, she has suspected that he was going for some time. And with the very person he has gone with."

"You think, then, that he has actually gone with—with——" The Dean could not bring himself to mention Ernesta's name. Sullivan saved him the embarrassment by finishing the sentence.

"With Miss Frost," said he. "There seems no doubt of it. In the first place, Professor Hopkins knew that he was going on considerable of a trip, and drew all the money he had in the bank, yesterday."

"You don't tell me that——"

"Five thousand dollars, sir, leaving his wife absolutely with no means of support."

"But he showed no indications in any way, up to yesterday afternoon."



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"Not to you, sir, perhaps, but perhaps to others. Else, how do you explain this note, written late last night and pinned to his laboratory door?"

"And written by Professor Snyder! You are right—Snyder at least must have known of Hopkins' intended disappearance. Besides, I am sure that others know about it. At least one other." Sullivan was none too anxious to tell the Dean more of what he had learned than was necessary. This hesitancy was not from any feeling that the Dean would betray his confidence, but from a fear that the old gentleman, unused to affairs of the kind, might, in a moment of garrulity, spoil his plans. So he contented himself with saying:

"The one I mean is Gordon. Now, sir, wasn't there something between him and the girl?"

"They were engaged to be married, I believe," said the Dean.

"Had she, as far as you know, ever had any previous love affair?"

"Yes," said the Dean, at which Sullivan pricked up his ears. "There was a young man here, last year—a Frenchman named Albert Rassignol. They were very much attached, it was thought, and some went so far as to say that they were engaged. But he went away, and after that it was generally believed that she and Professor Gordon were much in love with each other. But why do you ask about the previous affair? You certainly do not associate the disappearance of the girl now with young Rassignol? He has been in France ever since——"

"No," said Sullivan. "But I wish to learn all I can about her. You have never suspected that she and Professor Hopkins were——"

The Dean smiled.

"My dear sir," said he, "you never saw Professor Hopkins, did you?"

"I saw his picture," said Sullivan, "and I know what you mean. Nevertheless, the fact remains that he is gone, the girl is gone, and there's considerable mystery about it. We must find out what Professor Snyder and

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Professor Gordon know. Will you help me with the former?"

"I will, with pleasure," said the Dean. "I will call him in here now and demand——"

"No," said Sullivan, "you must go at him more gently. Don't let him know that you suspect him, just yet. He is too clever a man to be taken unawares, I'm afraid. Gordon is different. Leave him to me."

"When do you intend seeing him?"

"At once. With your permission I'll have a talk with him at his first leisure moment. Till then I guess I'll look around and you keep your eyes, please, on Snyder." Sullivan started toward the door. "By the way, Dean," he said, "I don't suppose you would know about such things, but could you recognise a wheelbarrow or a spade, or anything like that belonging to the college?"

"Well," said the Dean with a smile, "perhaps not. But everything purchased by the college in the way of tools and garden utensils is branded with its name."

"Thanks," said Sullivan, "I just wanted

to know. I suppose I could get further details from the gardener?"

"Yes," said the Dean. "You'll find him around somewhere. When shall I see you again?"

"Soon," said the detective. "In the meantime, if anybody should ask you, I am selling books, say something that would interest Professor Hopkins, such as——"

"The Final Resolution of the Chemical Elements?" suggested the Dean.

"That'll do," said Sullivan, and went out.

He determined to find the gardener. A search was not necessary, for he found him examining the very things he wished to inquire about, the wheelbarrow and the spade. The gardener looked up quizzically as Sullivan approached.

"Good-morning," said the detective; "you look pleased about something."

"Why not?" asked the gardener. "Wouldn't you be pleased if somebody presented you with a spade just about the time you were thinking of buying one?"

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"Why," said Sullivan, trying to conceal the delight that this unexpected opening gave him, "isn't that your spade?"

"No," said the gardener, "it looks like some o' them they used to use over to Bradley's ice-house when I worked there. I suppose some student found it and thought it was mine. Well, it is now." And he started off with the wheelbarrow and spade.

"Hold on," said Sullivan. "What's that on the spade?"

"Sawdust," said the gardener, after an investigation. "By gosh, it is from the ice-house and no mistake!"

"I'd like to ask that fellow where the ice-house is," said the detective to himself as the gardener went off. "But I guess I'd better not. Now I wonder if I can find Gordon."

He had reached the back of the building in his walk, and entered by a rear door, so that he passed the windows of the Dean's study. The Dean was just closing the door upon a man whom Sullivan recognised as one of the quartette of the adventure with the wheel-

barrow. 'As Sullivan entered the building this third person was vanishing down the hall with every appearance of haste. Sullivan knocked on the Dean's door.

"Was that Snyder?" he asked the Dean as he went in.

"Yes," was the excited rejoinder, "and he knows! He knows!"

"What did he say?"

"I asked him point blank if he didn't know about Hopkins' departure, and he had to admit it. Said that Hopkins and he met in this room yesterday afternoon, and Hopkins told him he was unexpectedly called out of town and wouldn't have time to communicate with me. Asked him, Snyder, if he wouldn't give me the message, which he forgot to do. But he did write the note that was on the laboratory door, at Hopkins' request, and meant to tell me all about the affair this morning."

"So he said that, did he?" demanded Sullivan. "And at what time did he say he put the note on the laboratory door?"

"About five o'clock yesterday afternoon,

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just before he went home to supper. Is it the truth? What do you think?"

"I don't think," said Sullivan, "I know! Snyder's story is a lie from beginning to end. And now to tackle Gordon!"

But Detective Sullivan did not see Professor Gordon, then, nor for some time afterward, for the young professor left town hurriedly on the noon train, not even stopping to pack a valise.

## **THE MISHAP TO ERNESTA**





## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE MISHAP TO ERNESTA

THERE was a telephone in Graydon College. Over it, this Tuesday morning when so many things were happening in and about the old building, came a message for Professor Gordon. He excused himself from his class and went to answer the caller.

"Hello! Professor Gordon? Well, this is the telegraph operator. There's a telegram here for you. Shall I wait till the mail's in or repeat it now?"

This was according to custom in Graydon, where there were no such things as messenger boys, and the telegraph operator, who was also the station agent, was in the habit of holding a wired message until the man from the post office came down to the station to get the mail. Otherwise he would telephone its contents to the proper person if he could be reached by that means.

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Gordon asked the agent to repeat the message.

"Here it is," came over the wire. "It's dated Boston, and says: 'Come immediately, South Terminal. Am in terrible trouble. Let nobody, least of all H., know.' It's signed Ernes——"

"That's all right! I know," said Gordon, in a trembling voice. "Is that all?"

"That's all."

Gordon hung up the receiver mechanically. Ernesta in trouble and sending for him! Of course he would go. He looked at his watch and found that it was ten o'clock. The next train would go at 10.30. He had time to make it, but he must not let anybody know that he was going.

As he returned to his classroom the students noticed his over-wrought appearance and exchanged looks. What had happened to him? Gordon made a brave effort to resume his work where he had left off and heard a few students recite; but he was unable to stand the strain very long. At the

earliest possible moment he excused himself again, this time taking his hat and saying that he felt faint and would take a turn around the building to recover.

Once outside he hurried down the hill to the village, and when out of sight of the college fairly ran to the station. He made his train with hardly a minute to spare.

To reach Boston from Graydon, you change cars at Burrville, eighteen miles from the college town. There you catch an express that lands you in Boston an hour later. To-day the journey seemed endless to Gordon, for his imagination had full play, and he pictured the various things that could have happened to Ernesta. He considered with satisfaction the fact that she could scarcely have suffered any bodily injury, or she would not be waiting for him in a railroad station.

He was the first out of the train when it reached Boston and he dashed up the long platform toward the great waiting-room. Among the thousands his eyes instantly caught sight of Ernesta, and she espied him

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simultaneously. She stretched out her arms in mute appeal as she saw Gordon, and he with a hungry cry rushed toward her. She fell into his arms, and he drew her closely to him.

"O," she sobbed, "I am so glad you've come! So glad!"

"What is it?" he asked. "Tell me, Ernesta, what has happened?"

"I've been robbed," she moaned. "Robbed—of \$5,000!"

Gordon gasped. "Five thousand dollars!" He looked at her in wonderment. The girl must be crazy. Something had happened to her to dethrone her mind, suddenly. He knew that she could not have had that sum of money.

"Don't look at me like that," she cried. "It's true, I tell you. I had it. And now it's gone! Gone! Oh, what shall I do?"

Gordon led her to a seat in a remote corner of the waiting-room and tried to calm her. He was still convinced that she was suffering from some fantasy of the mind; the whole

thing was so unnatural—her flight from Graydon without notice, her note to him, and now the telegram and—this. “Quiet, little girl,” he said, soothingly. “Quiet! You’re all right. I’m here!”

“You don’t believe me,” she said. “I see you don’t, George! But it is so. It’s all so. Don’t think I’m crazy—I am, almost, but not that way—I did have five thousand dollars all in my bag here! I was waiting to take the train to New York. I saw my bag was open, and looked, and the money was gone. Then I telegraphed you. Oh, what shall I do?”

Her earnestness convinced Gordon in spite of the preposterousness of it all. He said:

“When was this?”

“This morning at half past seven,” faltered Ernesta. “I was going to New York on the seven-forty-five train.”

He wanted to ask her why she wished to go to New York. He wanted to ask her a great deal more; but this was not the time. If she really had had the money and it was stolen, the police must be notified and some-

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thing done to recover it. He asked her if she could identify the robbers, if she had noticed any suspicious persons in her vicinity in the station. No, she sobbed, she had not. She could not account for the loss of the money in any way. It simply was in her bag—and then was not.

In vain he tried to comfort her. She stopped her crying, but only to sink into a condition of blank despair, gazing vacantly around her. Gordon was distressed, but finally he rallied his senses and said:

“Well, Ernesta, there is only one thing to do. If you have lost this immense sum of money, the police must be notified.”

She leaped to her feet.

“The police,” she repeated. “Oh, George, no, no, no!”

“Why not?”

“Because—because——Oh, I cannot tell you, but the police must not know. Nobody must know!”

“Then how on earth do you expect to get the money back?”

"I don't know—I don't know! But the police—never! Promise me you won't tell the police! It would be in the papers—it would—no, it is impossible!"

Gordon was more mystified than ever. Here was a girl, who had never had \$5,000 in her life, to the best of his belief, claiming to have just lost that sum and yet refusing to have the police notified, because it would get in the papers. What was there back of it? Suddenly the thought came to him—she does not want the matter made public—because somebody else would know she had lost the money. Who is this somebody? Hopkins! The tableau on the window curtain, in which they had seen Hopkins giving Ernesta money! It was all plain. He recoiled from her in horror. She noticed it and said:

"George, George, what is the matter? Why do you look at me so?"

"Ernesta," he said slowly and deliberately, "where did you get that money? Who gave it to you?"

She was silent. She seemed about to speak,



but restrained herself and averted her face. He repeated:

"Who gave you that money? Tell me, was it Professor Hopkins?"

"Oh," she cried, "you must not ask me. I cannot tell you. But believe me, believe *in* me. You shall know, not now, but sometime—yes, I promise you, but don't ask me now."

"I must," he insisted. "I ask you again. Was it Hopkins?"

Ernesta drew herself up.

"Mr. Gordon," she said, "I have asked you not to press me on that subject. I had the money for—for a purpose. I have lost it. I thought I could call on you to help me. If you still insist on catechising me, I shall ask you no more favours. You may go."

She made a bold effort to walk away from him, but he clutched her arm.

"Forgive me, Ernesta," he said. "I didn't mean to distress you. You don't know the doubts and fears that have been running through my mind since yesterday. You don't

know the things that have happened. I trust you. You don't need to tell me anything. But, if you want to find the money, you must let me do something."

"No," she said, "I am sure it is gone for good. But I must have an equal amount and you must get it for me."

"Impossible," said Gordon. "You know that I haven't that much money."

"You must get it," she said coolly. "You told me once, when you—when you asked me to marry you—that you owned some property here, in Boston. You must raise five thousand dollars on it at once. Oh, I know what I am asking, I know you must think me crazy or—or something. But I tell you George, if I do not get the money to-day, I shall kill myself. Yes, I mean it!"

"And if you do get it—Ernesta, tell me all! Tell me what you want it for. Tell me—has Professor Hopkins anything to do with your going away from Graydon?"

The question was out before Gordon knew it. He would have swallowed his words if he

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had known the effect they would have on her. She fairly bristled with indignation.

"So that is it," she said. "I might have known it! My association with the professor, my evenings in the laboratory! It's gossip, is it! And my sudden departure caused the scandal to burst! Well, if that's what they think, if that's what *you* think—why didn't you ask Professor Hopkins before you came away in answer to my telegram? Yes, why didn't you ask him?"

Gordon stared blankly at her. He saw a picture of Hopkins as he had last seen him, that refulgent, grinning, inert thing, just as they wrapped it in the paper and threw their coats over it. He could make no answer.

"Oh," cried Ernesta, "if they only knew! If they could only understand! But they wouldn't! What do I care, though? Let them think anything they please. But I won't have you suspect me, George. I tell you, you must not, cannot! You don't! As to this money, won't you believe me when I tell you that it

is a matter of life and death! Yes, life and death! Oh, I'll repay it, you'll be repaid over and over again. I am not speaking wildly. I mean exactly what I say. But if you love me, if you want me to live, you'll get the money. Will you?"

Gordon could have denied her nothing at this moment. He would have believed her against the evidence of the world. He said:

"Ernesta, I don't understand it, but I trust you. Come, I'll try to get the money for you!"

Ernesta's gratitude was beautiful. She looked at him with an expression of perfect love, and he knew that there was nothing of deceit in that look. He felt that he could trust her with his life. Even the shadow of doubt was removed from his eyes just then. He did not want to know her secret. They rose.

Suddenly, as the full realisation of the man's goodness and generosity came to her, she threw her arms about his neck, saying:

"My own! My deliverer!" Those who saw the action, gasped in wonder. Gordon blushed

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and hung his head. Ernesta was the only one not embarrassed. Gently he disentangled her embrace and led her to a cab outside the station. In a moment they were whirling away to his lawyer's.

## **THE ICE-POND EXCITEMENT**



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE ICE-POND EXCITEMENT

It is against the rules of the Telegraph Company for its agents to divulge the contents of any telegram that comes over its lines. Detective Sullivan, however, had an ingratiating way with him, and the operator at Graydon was soon convinced that it would be best for him to show him the message that had come to Professor Gordon and caused his hasty departure from town.

On reading the telegram Sullivan was astonished. Here was a complication that he had not expected. A girl, running away from her affianced husband with another man, telegraphing to the deserted man for him to come to her assistance! It was a staggering situation.

"But," said the detective to himself, "what sort of trouble do you suppose she's got into?"



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Is it possible that old Hopkins has become panic stricken and deserted her? Hardly so soon as this? What can it be? And who is 'H' that she doesn't want Gordon to tell about it? I'll swear this case is getting too complicated to suit me!"

Immediately he telegraphed to his Boston office:

"Watch South Terminal for handsome blonde young woman and man looking like college professor. Follow them if spotted. Am taking next train to Boston. Hopkins case most difficult."

There would not be another train until late in the afternoon, but Sullivan applied the knowledge of trolley connection which he had gleaned that morning, and hurried to the livery stable, where he engaged a rig and a driver to take him over to the nearest town, a matter of only two miles, where he could get a trolley that would bring him within reach of a railroad. He gave the driver a story to the effect that he must get back to Boston to see about some important book business,

and promised the young man that on his return he would bring him something to read.

Before departing he took the precaution of coaching the now completely perplexed Dean in the way to handle this latest phase of the situation.

"Tell 'em Gordon has gone to Boston with your permission," said Sullivan. "Don't let 'em think he's vanished too. It would be bound to get around and the papers would have it. Keep it mum; let them think all they please, but don't let on that you know all about it. And watch Snyder and his crowd! I'll be back to-morrow, perhaps to-night. Maybe I'll have Hopkins with me."

The Dean followed these instructions, but, as his pretended acquiescence in Professor Gordon's departure did not seem to entirely satisfy the curiosity of the college, he addressed the students in a body, cautioning them against talking of the distressful affairs of the last two days, and assuring them that it would all come out right.

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"There is an unfortunate mistake somewhere," he said. "A series of peculiar and apparently inexplicable coincidences, which will, however, be all explained satisfactorily before long. In the meantime, I pray you, stem the tide of gossip, stifle curiosity and hope for the best. It is for the good of Graydon!"

The Dean's little speech did much to better the situation, and the loyal students made an earnest effort to believe and make others believe that the disappearance of Professor Hopkins, Ernesta Frost and Professor Gordon, all within a few hours of each other, was a matter of no great mystery.

It was a frightened, trembling trio, however, that met in Rice's classroom at the lunch hour. Rice evinced the manner of a mathematician who had met an unsolvable problem. Snyder, in manner and thinking capacity, had reached the consistency of a jelly fish. Fischer was palsied.

"Gordon gone!" was the burden of their thoughts. "Gone! Fled! Why?"

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"He received a telephone call, I am told," said Rice, "and instantly put on his hat and vanished. He must have taken the train. Who could have called him? What did they say?"

"I heard he was fearfully frightened," said Snyder.

"Over what?" asked Fischer. "Dere is only one t'ing for any of us to get frightened over, and dot is der finding of Hopkins' body. Has anybody been out to der ice-house to see if it is safe?"

"I'm sure I haven't," said Rice, "and I don't think that Professor Snyder has," he sneered as he looked at the boneless Snyder, cowering in a chair.

"I saw you coming out of der Dean's study," said Fischer to Snyder. "Vot vas it?"

"The Dean has discovered that I wrote the note pinned to the laboratory door," said Snyder, in a hoarse whisper. "He knew it before he sent for me. I admitted it, and he asked me how I knew Hopkins was going out of town. I told him Hopkins had told me,

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and that I had put the note on the door yesterday afternoon."

"You fool!" growled Fischer. "Why didn't you tell the truth?"

"Why didn't you?" demanded Snyder, in a cringing manner. "When the Dean asked you if you knew anything about Hopkins you said no."

"Dot was our agreement," said Fischer.

"But the Dean suspected. He said Gordon suggested that one of us might know——"

"What!" cried Rice. "So that is it? That's why Gordon, the coward, the traitor, has fled! Gentlemen, we are in a bad predicament!"

"Ve are," asserted Fischer. "Vorse and vorse!"

"What is to be done?" asked Rice.

Snyder made a suggestion. "Oh," he cried in despair, "let's make a clean breast of it all. Let's say that Hopkins committed suicide. Tell the incident of the illumination of his body; say that we took it to the ice-house——"

"Yes; and be arrested for murder!" said

## THE ICE-POND EXCITEMENT 175

Fischer, sarcastically. "Snyder, you think like an ass!"

"We might allow them to find the body where it is," said Rice, "and believe that he went there to commit suicide."

"Suicides do not pile boards and sawdust over demselves," said Fischer. "Besides, dere is somethings else." He then narrated the incident of the spade and the wheelbarrow, and the stranger examining them under his classroom window. "Vat do you make of dat?" he asked.

Snyder and Rice were speechless. They felt like criminals around whom the net was tightening momentarily. The cold sweat stood out like pearls on Rice's forehead. Snyder was more limp than before.

"Gentlemen," said Rice, after a long pause, "this is a moment requiring the deepest thought of our lives. A single false step and we are ruined. More than that, our lives are in danger. Our mistaken interest in Professor Hopkins' private affairs"—he cast a withering look at Snyder—"has placed us in the

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shadow of the gallows! We must move carefully!"

At that moment the sound of many voices broke on their ears. They started. Any unusual noise now was sufficient to set their nerves on edge. The voices were those of small boys, arguing with the gardener, who also acted as janitor of the college building.

"But we want to see Professor Hopkins," a small boy's voice was insisting. "We got something for him!" This statement, reinforced by the corroboration of many other treble voices, brought the gardener's assurance that Professor Hopkins was out of town.

"What can they want of Hopkins?" said Rice to his companions. "Had we better see?"

Ordinarily they would not have presumed to meddle in an affair concerning the absent professor, but under the circumstances anything applying to him interested them. Their hesitation, even now, to interfere, was soon set aside by what they next heard.

"What do you want of Professor Hopkins,

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anyhow?" the gardener was demanding of the boys. "And what's that in the jugs you have?"

"Water," said one of the boys. "They told us to bring it to Professor Hopkins and he'd tell us what was the matter with it."

"What is the matter with it?" asked the gardener.

"We don't know," said the boy. "It's funny—like—full of needles, or something."

"Get out," said the gardener. "Where'd you get it?"

"Over to Bradley's ice-pond," came the answer. Snyder, Rice and Fischer came to their feet with a single bound. They threw open the door of the room and faced the boys. Rice became spokesman.

"What's that?" he demanded. The gardener explained what they had already heard.

"Wh—what did you say was the matter with the water?" he asked one of the boys. The little fellow held out a glass jar full of water, to Rice.

"Feel it, Professor," he said. Rice removed



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the cover of the jar and inserted his hand in the water. "Why," he said, "it seems to be charged with some mineral. It has a strange, invigorating feeling!"

"Hasn't it!" exclaimed the boys. "And say, you'd oughter try to go in swimmin' in it. Me and Jimmy here found it out this morning. We went over to the ice-pond to take a swim, and when we put our feet in they began to tingle. What makes it?"

"I—I am at loss to know," said Rice. "If you'll leave some of the water here I'll analyse it. Perhaps I can tell you to-morrow. Where did you get the water?"

"Over to Bradley's ice-pond," came the chorus.

"But vat part of der pond?" asked Fischer.

"All around," said a boy. "But it's most tingly right near the old ice-house." A moan from Snyder, which the boys interpreted as an exclamation of incredulity. They turned on him.

"Don't you believe it?" they demanded.

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"Well, you just come over there and see. Everybody's over there, and they'll all show you. Come on, fellows!"

"Did you hear what he said?" asked Rice, when the boys had gone. "Everybody's over at the ice-pond. The body will be found!"

"Gott!" cried Fischer.

"And we covered it up with boards and sawdust," said Snyder, as one in a dream.

"Do you suppose," said Rice, "that there is any connection between the presence of the body near the water and the condition of the water itself?"

"It iss quite likely," said Fischer. "Hopkins' researches haf recently been in the field of radium and such t'ings!"

"Perhaps the fatal solution which he drank, and which has made his body luminous, has affected the water," added Snyder.

"Interesting speculations, but of no importance," snapped Rice. "What we have to guard against is the discovery of the body in the ice-house."

"How?" sneered Fischer. "Vould you

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suggest that we put up a sign, saying 'KEEP AWAY! DANGEROUS'?"

"Joking with death!" said Rice reprovingly. "We can suggest nothing until we visit the spot and see what the circumstances are."

Snyder and Fischer would both be engaged with classes directly after luncheon, so it was decided that Rice should go, as a committee of one, to look the situation over and make a report. He found that the boys had not exaggerated. The greater part of Graydon which could leave its daily duties—and some portions that should not have done so—was collected about the shores of the ice-pond. Rice, as a disciple of science, was hailed by those who knew him, made to feel the water, forced to taste it—which he did with a wry face and a stomach that almost refused to do its functions, and plied with questions. He could give no definite answer to any of the queries as to what caused the strange action of the water. To the village druggist, who declared that the pond had suddenly turned

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into a vast soda fountain, Rice said that it seemed quite likely.

"You know," said the druggist, in a professional whisper, "they make artificial vichy out of marble dust, somehow, I'm told. Maybe there's a subterranean marble quarry around here somewhere, and the dust is leaking into the lake."

"Very plausible," asserted Rice. "You might mention that fact generally." He thought it would be just as well to have the attention of the public directed as far away from the real cause—or what he firmly believed to be the real cause—as possible.

Jonas Bradley, owner of the ice-pond, asked Rice his opinion as to whether it would be a good plan, financially, to bottle the water and sell it for medicinal purposes. The professor, shuddering at the thought, advised delay, to see whether the condition of the pond would be permanent.

As the boys had said, the peculiar tingling effect of the water was most apparent in the vicinity of the ice-house. Rice reached that

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part of the pond in fear and trembling. He noticed a group standing in earnest conversation by the side of the tumbledown old shed, and his heart stopped beating in dread that they had already discovered the body of Hopkins and were discussing their find. His fears were groundless, however.

At the first opportunity he edged toward the ice-house and managed to secure a glimpse of the interior through a wide crack in the plank wall. Through a chink in the roof, the sun was beating into the house, its rays falling directly on the corner where they had secreted the body. At first Rice was alarmed by this illumination of Nature, but on second thought he realised that it was an excellent piece of good fortune.

"While the sun is shining," he said to himself, "the refulgence of the body, if it hasn't died out, will not be noticeable." He noted, too, with satisfaction, that no portion of the bundle showed. They had done their work well, and the planks and sawdust completely covered the ghastly secret.

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Rice spent as much time at the ice-pond as he dared steal away from his duties, returning only when his presence was absolutely necessary at the college. After the last classes had been dismissed, he again sought conference with his remaining two partners in crime.

"So far the body has not been discovered," he said. "But it cannot be concealed for long. Old Bradley, owner of the pond, is for setting up a bottling plant at once and converting what he considers a freak of nature into money. Very likely he will locate it at the ice-house. By to-morrow morning, if the body has not been discovered in the meantime, there will be a still bigger crowd on hand, and someone is absolutely certain to stumble over Hopkins."

"It seems to me," said Fischer, knitting his brows, "dot it is not to-morrow dat we haf to fear. It iss to-night. If der body is still as luminous as it vas——?" he stopped questioningly.

"The condition of the water indicates that

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it has not lost any of its peculiar properties," said Rice.

"Den," said Fischer, "ven der crowd goes out dere to-night, or if only von person goes, dey will be sure to see der strange light."

"We must prevent that possibility," said Rice. "We must remove the body to-night." Snyder groaned. He did not relish such a task. Fischer glared at him.

"Vat!" he demanded, "you, too, weakening? Look here, Snyder, I varn you dot any attempt on your part to desert now will be mighty disastrous to you! You brought this whole affair on, and you'll stick till—till the bitter end!"

"I didn't intend doing anything else," expostulated Snyder with an attempt at a show of bravery that was far from his real feelings. "Only it all seems so horrible!"

"It is," said Rice, "and we must all keep it from growing any more horrible."

"Den it is settled—ve move der body to-night?" asked Fischer.

"I think so," said Rice. "Suppose we meet

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here to-night, in front of the building, at ten o'clock. If they have not found it by that time we will place it somewhere else."

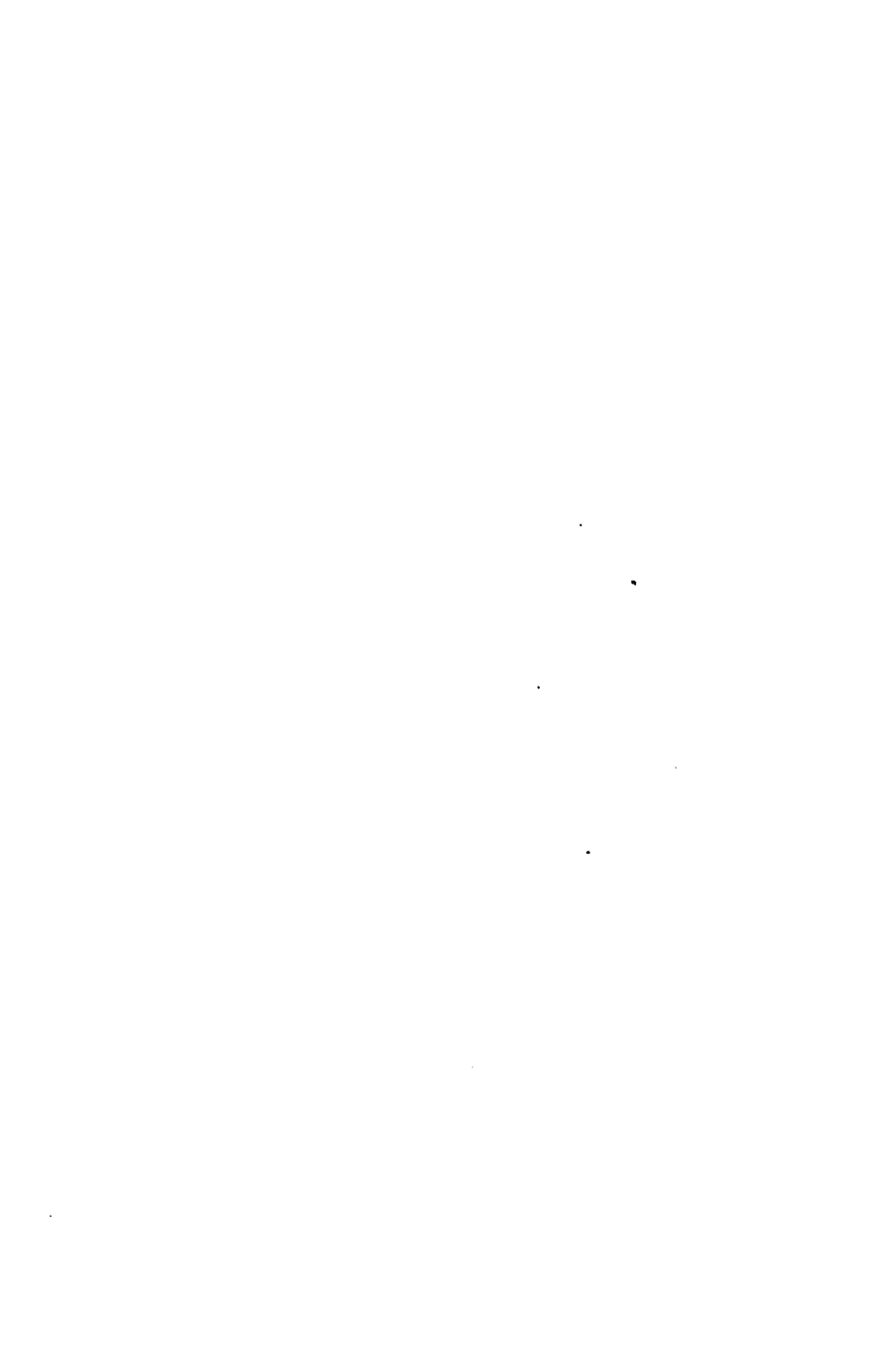
"Where?" asked Snyder. Rice and Fischer thought.

"I have it," said Rice.

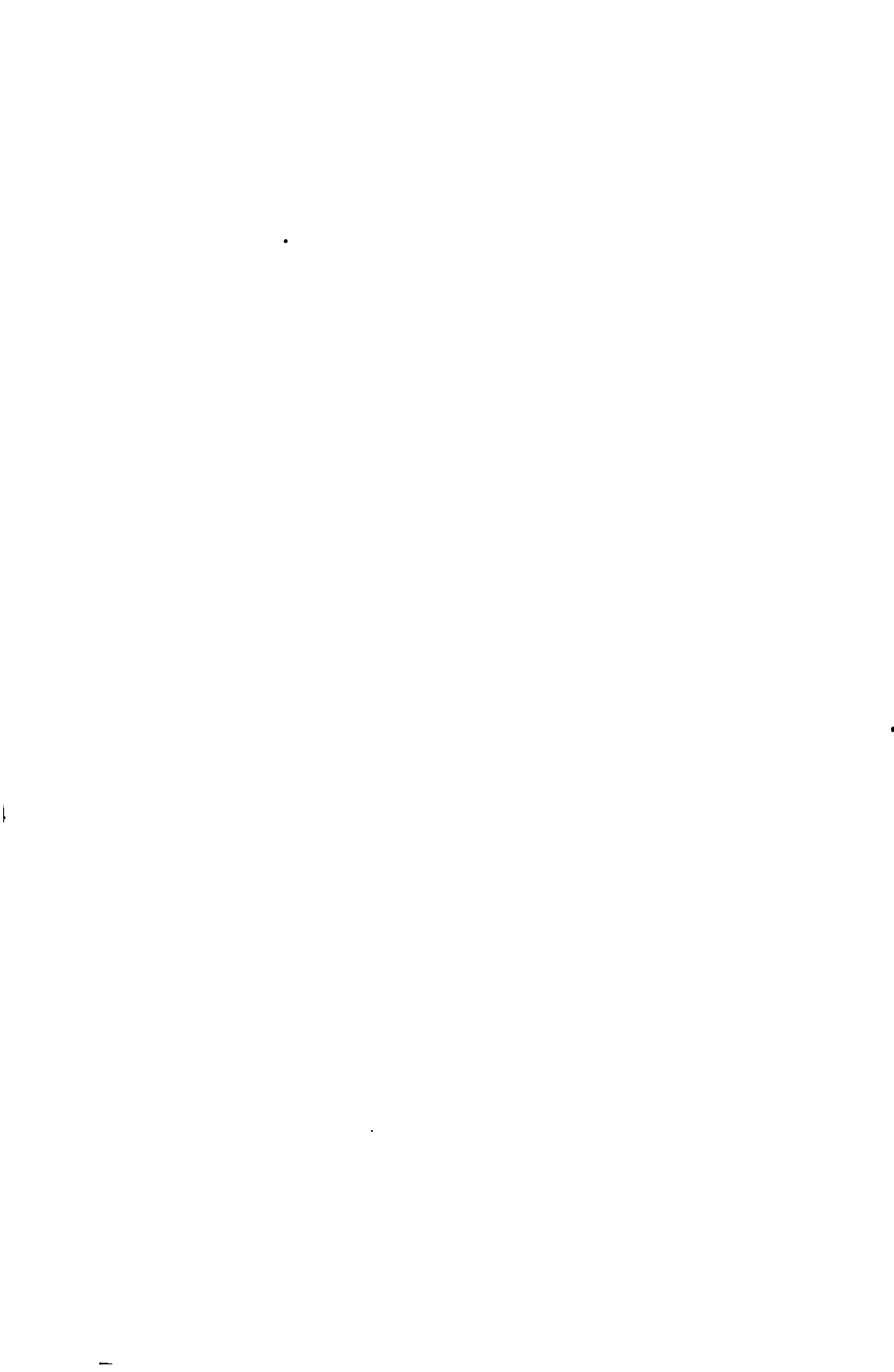
A sudden realisation of the need for caution came over him. He beckoned the others nearer to him, and whispered in a tone so low that they could barely hear what he said. They nodded.

"The very place," said Snyder.





## **THE PURSUIT OF ERNESTA'**



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE PURSUIT OF ERNESTA

DETECTIVE SULLIVAN reached Boston about two o'clock in the afternoon. As he alighted from the train he caught sight of one of the men from the main office, and hurried to him.

"Hello, Murphy," was his greeting. "The chief got my message?"

"Sure," replied Murphy, "and we've landed 'em all right. Krauss was put on the case, and saw the girl and the fellow meet right here. Then he sent for me. He kept his eyes on 'em until they jumped into a cab and went uptown, and he followed, leaving me here to tip you off."

"Where did they go?" asked Sullivan.

"Krauss will have 'phoned the office about that," said Murphy. "We'll call up and see."

Communication with headquarters of Allen's Detective Agency resulted in Sullivan's

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leaping into a public carriage and being driven rapidly to No. 6, Pemberton Square. On the sidewalk he saw Krauss.

"Hello, Krauss, what's up?" he demanded.

"They're upstairs," said Krauss. "I spotted 'em the moment they got together down at the South Terminal. They talked a long while, mighty excited, but I didn't dare get near enough to overhear what they said. Finally the girl—say, she's all right!—finally she threw her arms around his neck, right before the crowd. He looked mighty foolish, and led her to a cab. They jumped in and come up here. I was right behind them, and I've been watching ever since. There's no back way out o' this building—I know the lay of things around here all right. So, if they come out at all, they'll have to come this way. What have they done?"

"I don't know exactly," said Sullivan. "It's a complicated case. The girl's wanted for eloping, that's all so far. Maybe the man—well, I can't tell just yet." He attempted to look mysterious to make Krauss believe he

knew more than he was telling. "How long have they been in the building, and what are they up to?"

"About an hour," said Krauss. "They're in a lawyer's office on the second floor. I saw them at the window a little while before you came. Look! There's the girl now!"

Sullivan glanced at the second story window in one of the old dwelling houses converted into business offices. He saw a young woman whom he instantly recognised as Ernesta Frost from her resemblance to the photograph in Mrs. Hopkins' parlour. He was struck with her beauty, which was all the more attractive at this moment, the girl's face being lighted up with a happy smile, her eyes aglow with evident satisfaction over something. Then she was joined by Gordon, and Sullivan withdrew from the range of vision just in time, as it was not in his book to be seen by the young professor as yet.

"Yes," said the detective, "I see they're there all right. Now I'll tell you. I don't want to keep you standing here any longer,

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and you can go if you want to. Tell the chief, though, to keep somebody at the office in case I telephone for help, and let him know that I'm standing watch on this couple. I'll be down to the office later, I hope."

Krauss departed, leaving Sullivan alone on the sidewalk. As he watched the building, he had plenty of time to try to patch the strange facts and theories of this remarkable case together.

"She's given Hopkins the slip, I guess," said he to himself. "Probably her telegram to Gordon about being in trouble was all a bluff to get him there. So she threw her arms around him in the station, did she? That looks like she cared for him, all right. But what are they doing in a lawyer's office? You can't get married off the reel in Boston, I know, so it can't be that. Some legal business, I suppose, but what kind? I'd like to be up there to find out!"

"And where's poor old Hopkins all this time? Poor, deluded old fellow! I'll bet he's sick of his job, all right! I wonder if she's

got his money? Most likely she has, and she and the young chap are going off to enjoy it. Poor old Hopkins! I wish they'd come out!"

He glanced up at the window. Ernesta was shaking hands with a legal looking person, and Gordon was placing his hat on his head.

"They're coming," said Sullivan, and hurried across the square, into the entrance of the court house, where he stood watching the door of Number 6. In a few minutes Ernesta and Gordon came down the steps. Sullivan was on the alert. There were no cabs in the square, and they would have to walk down the hill to Scollay Square. They turned the corner, and Sullivan, only so far behind as he considered absolutely necessary, followed. As they reached Tremont Row Gordon glanced at his watch, and said something to Ernesta, with the result that she took his arm and they quickened their steps, going across the Row to the subway station. It is a difficult thing to shadow anyone in an underground railroad waiting-room, as everybody is obliged to



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stand so near to everybody else. Sullivan, then, allowed Gordon and the girl to get further ahead of him, and waited till they had descended the stairs and reached the lower platform before he bought a ticket and dropped it in the box.

As he heard a train coming in, he made ready for a quick start down the stairs, and watched to see what car the couple would enter. Just in time, he dashed down the stairs and jumped aboard the car behind the one they had entered.

He could see them easily. Gordon appeared very nervous, continually consulting his watch. Sullivan in turn looked at his, and found that it was lacking ten minutes to three o'clock.

"They can't be trying to catch a train," thought the detective, "or they wouldn't be going uptown. I have it. They're afraid they'll be too late for banking hours!"

Gordon and Ernesta alighted at Boylston street. Sullivan now had no trouble in following them undetected in the crowd. They as-

cended to the Common, crossed the street, and entered a bank on the corner. Sullivan smiled with satisfaction at the correctness of his deductions. He tried to peer in at the windows of the bank, but could see nothing from the front, so he stepped around into Boylston Street and had the satisfaction of being able to watch every movement of Ernesta and Gordon.

They went hurriedly to the paying teller's window, and Sullivan saw that the man behind it knew Gordon, for he reached through and shook his hand. Then ensued what Sullivan interpreted as an introduction of Ernesta, after which the girl passed a check through the window and the teller reached into his money drawer. While he was getting the necessary cash, the girl's face was a study to the detective. It fairly radiated happiness, yet with this was mingled a look of anxiety, as though she feared that after all she was not to receive the money. Gordon wore a frown.

The teller began to count out the money,

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and Ernesta took each bill as he laid it on the counter. Sullivan could not, of course, tell what the total amount was, but yellow-backed bills predominated in the lot that she received, and there were so many of them that he whistled to himself with astonishment.

"Another windfall!" he said. Then Gordon thanked the teller, Ernesta being apparently too busy tucking the money away in her purse; and they came out.

Again Sullivan was behind them, this time so near that he heard Gordon say to Ernesta:

"Now, dear, you must be careful of this money. Five thousand dollars do not grow on every bush."

"Oh, I will, I will," she replied earnestly. Then with a look into his face that showed gratitude and love, she added impulsively, "George, dear, you don't know—if you only could know how happy you have made me!"

Gordon made no answer. His head was dropped, his forehead knitted to a frown. The girl noticed this and said:

"George, you don't doubt that you have

done right? You trust me, don't you?" He did not reply instantly, and she waited impatiently. Finally he raised his head. The furrows of anxiety were gone. He seemed to have had a struggle with some feeling that he had striven to master and had mastered after a bitter contest. He looked at the girl and smiled:

"Yes," he said, "I do trust you!"

Gordon hailed a passing cab and helped Ernesta into it. Sullivan did not try to hear the directions he gave, but leaped into another equipage and ordered the driver to keep the first one in sight. Then he sank back to digest the meaning of what had just happened.

"I think it's very clear," he said to himself. "Old Hopkins gives her a check for five thousand. She runs away from him and tries to cash the check, but can't because they don't know her at any of the banks. Penniless, she sends for Gordon, knowing that he is acquainted in Boston. He introduces her at this bank, and now she has the money. But where now?"

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It never occurred to him to think that Gordon could have such a sum of money as \$5,000. Such an idea would not have entered anybody's head. His position, his economical habits, everything in his life pointed to his being a young man of no fortune. Sullivan's interpretation of the entire proceedings, therefore, was only a natural one.

His cab stopped with a sudden motion at the South Terminal Station.

"They've just gone inside," said the driver. Sullivan leaped out, paid for the cab and rushed into the station. He saw Gordon at the ticket window. Waiting until he and Ernesta had left and started across the big room toward the trains, he stepped to the window and accosted the man in charge.

"I'm a detective," he said, presenting his card. "I want to know where that man just bought tickets for." The ticket seller replied that Gordon had purchased transportation for New York on the 3.30.

"Gimme one," said Sullivan. It was within a minute of the time for the train to start.

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Gordon and Ernesta were not in sight down the platform. They must be aboard. As the gong sounded and the guard called "All aboard," Sullivan swung himself upon a car, mopping his brow and wondering whether he was doing the right thing.

"I'll take a chance," he said.



## **THE BLIND FIDDLER'S VISION**



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What happened to him on this walk became known a half hour later, when he dashed into the barroom of the hotel, shaking with fright.

In one hand he grasped what was left of his fiddle. Now it was broken and the neck was detached from the body, hanging by the strings. He burst through the swinging doors, groping his way, and would have fallen had not some of the loungers and the landlord caught him and led him to a chair, where he sat, huddled in a heap, shivering and moaning, his hands clutching the wreck of his violin and beating with it wildly about in the air.

"Here! Here!" said the landlord, when he could make himself heard above the tumult that this astonishing entrance had caused. "Dan! Speak! What's the matter with you?"

"Take it away! Take it away!" screamed the blind man. "It will kill me!" And he beat the air again. The landlord seized the man's wrists and held them, while others tried to elicit something intelligible from him.

They offered him liquor, but the landlord quickly pushed it away from the blind man's lips.

"Dan don't drink," he said. "Here, Dan, come to! What's the matter? Don't you know where you are? This is Sloan, the landlord. You're all right! They ain't going to get you, whoever they are! Who was it? What was it?"

Dan drew the landlord close to him. He raised his face and turned it in all directions. Had he not been sightless they might have thought he was trying to see something. His empty eye-balls seemed to be looking, looking, looking. The crowd was silent. Finally he said, turning to the landlord:

"Mr. Sloan, I've seen—I've seen, mind you!"

"Go on, Dan," said the landlord, failing to notice the emphasis with which Dan had uttered the word so out of place in a blind man's vocabulary.

"Don't you understand? I tell you I've seen! My eyes have shown me something."

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"You don't mean to tell me you've got your sight back? Is that it?"

"I thought so, I thought so," moaned the man. "It was horrible, Mr. Sloan, horrible!"

He buried his face in the landlord's sleeve and sobbed. Suddenly he again lifted his head and now, slightly calmer than before, continued:

"I was coming through the woods over from Milltown. It was dark, but I know the way. I had my fiddle under my arm, and was feeling my way along, perfectly happy. I could smell the blossoms in the hawthorn hedge that grows all around Cedar Hill Cemetery, so I know just where I was when—when it happened.

"All of a sudden I heard a rumbling sound. It seemed to come from the road where the wood path leads into it. You know, the road that leads to the cemetery gate. I stopped a little, because I was sort of afraid. I don't know just why, but it was late, and the place was kind of creepy. At first I thought of

body-snatchers, because the rumbling didn't sound like a wagon, and I imagined it was a wheelbarrow they were stealing a body in, like they did once before.

"Well, I waited. I guess I was hidden by some bushes. The rumbling sound came nearer, and then—O God! I saw!

"You don't know what that meant to me, gentlemen! You don't know what it is to be in darkness all these years, always with the hope that some day the veil's going to be lifted. I thought that minute had come, and I wanted to cheer. It was a queer kind of seeing, as though a bright light was coming toward me. I seemed to feel it, kind of. It wasn't like any light I remembered, brighter even than the day that anvil exploded in my face. But the next minute I was glad I hadn't cheered, because what I saw was—Mr. Sloan, it was a body! Yes, I swear it was a human body, and it was dead!"

The crowd looked at one another in gasping astonishment.

"Go on," whispered the landlord.

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"At first I couldn't make out just what it was. It looked to be something long and all wrapped up, and it was. It was a body wrapped in a shroud. The face was just as plain, though, right through the shroud and everything. And it looked at me!"

"Was it—was it walking?"

"No; it was floating along a couple of feet from the ground, like a ghost. And I heard voices! Yes, I heard voices!"

"You say you saw the face," asked the landlord. "Did you—had you ever seen it before?"

The blind man again clasped the landlord's sleeve and drew him down nearer.

"Yes," he whispered, so the crowd could not hear him, "I knew the face. It was old Professor Hopkins!"

"Hush!" cautioned the landlord. "You're crazy!"

"Say what you please," the blind man insisted, "I tell you I saw him; saw him just as well as you see me now. Oh, don't try to convince me. You can't!"

"Why, I'll leave it to anyone——"

"Don't," pleaded Dan. "Don't tell anybody. They wouldn't believe me. I know what they think about Professor Hopkins, that he's run away with Ernesta Frost. Oh, yes. I've heard all the gossip; but I tell you, Mr. Sloan, I saw him. If I didn't, I hope I may never see again!"

The blind man's tone was meant to be convincing. But the landlord could not believe him. When the crowd of loungers endeavoured to find out what the whispered part of the conversation had been he would have told them, but Dan pleaded so earnestly that he kept silent.

"Don't bother about it, boys," said the landlord. "It's a dream of Dan's. I guess something snapped in his eyes. Dan, you'd better see a doctor to-morrow."

"Don't laugh," begged the blind man.

"All right, Dan," said the landlord, winking at the crowd, "I won't." Then in a whisper to one of the loungers: "Take Dan home. I don't believe he's just right."

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The man led Dan out, protesting that he did not need any escort, and saying:

“I tell you I saw it! I hit at it with my fiddle, and struck it. Look at my fiddle!”

Nor was Dan Hawkins the only resident of Graydon to see strange things. On the following evening, no less reliable a person than a deacon in the Baptist Church, chancing to glance out of his dining-room window, about eight o'clock, observed a peculiar glow in the heavens over Cedar Hill Cemetery, situated in the southeastern part of the village. He rubbed his spectacles and looked again. There was no doubt of it. The sky was suffused with a glare such as that caused in northern climes by the Aurora Borealis, and, occasionally, in New England, when these northern lights are particularly strong.

The deacon was about to call his wife to see the Aurora, when he suddenly reflected that this could not be it, for this was spring time, and furthermore, the Aurora does not appear in the southeast. But he called his wife and asked her if she could see the glow.

"Mercy!" she exclaimed. "It's a fire somewhere!"

"No," said the deacon, "that's no fire. It's too white. I don't think I ever saw such a light before. I wonder if Dean Quimby has gone to bed yet."

The Dean resided next door, and the deacon found him in his study, writing. As a matter of fact, the Dean was transcribing to paper a report of the strange occurrences of this week, with a view to seeing what relation they could all bear to each other, and principally to the case of Professor Hopkins. He did not relish being disturbed, but the Deacon's insistence at last forced him to go out on his piazza and take a look over Cemetery Hill. What he saw greatly astonished him.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "What can it be?"

"That's what I've been wondering," said the deacon. "Did you ever see a light like it before?"

"I never did," said the Dean. "Let us go



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down town and see if anybody else has perceived it."

They had not gone far down the street when they found that the appearance of the strange light was already the prime topic of conversation, having superseded even the gossip regarding Hopkins.

"It's a comet," insisted the druggist. "I remember just before the war broke out I saw one that made a light like that."

"'And in the last times there shall come signs in the heavens,'" quoted the Deacon to the Dean.

"It's a sure sign that something's going to happen!" was the verdict of the women. Of all the prophets they were the nearest to being right.

"Why don't somebody go and find out what it is?" asked someone. Needless to say, he did not add, "I'll volunteer to lead an investigating party!" Nobody in Graydon had any strong desire to pay a visit to Cemetery Hill at night. Graydon was not an oversuperstitious community, but there are things

at which the most matter-of-fact people balk. Night excursions to remote cemeteries are in that category.

So Graydon contented itself with wondering, theorising and predicting for that night. And in the morning, naturally enough, the light was not visible. It was, however, talked about all day, and with the first sign of twilight the town turned its collective eye in the direction of the cemetery again, and said, with eager, expectant lips:

“Will it come again?”

And in the throngs that centred their gaze on the distant hill, crowned with cedar trees and its outline broken with projecting grave-stones, were three persons more interested than all the others. These were the colleagues of the missing Gordon, Messrs. Fischer, Rice and Snyder.



## **THE ESCAPE OF ERNESTA**



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE ESCAPE OF ERNESTA

SULLIVAN was morally certain that Gordon and Ernesta had not the slightest idea that they were followed. However, he had been fooled once before in his career by a man whom he was shadowing, and in exactly the same way that they might now be deceiving him. So he did not allow himself to become absolutely sure that his quarry was headed for New York until the train had stopped at the Back Bay station and gone on.

"If they didn't try to give me the slip there," was his comment, "I guess it's all right!" By a glance in through the door of their car—they had not taken a Pullman—he saw them seated, half way down the car, busily engaged in conversation. "I think I can ride easier in the smoker," he said and went back to that car.

The six-hour ride to New York gave the

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detective more time than he wanted to commune with himself. Speculation on the reason for Gordon and the girl going to the metropolis could result in nothing but more speculation. He tried to get his mind off the subject of the Hopkins case and everything connected with it. He bought a book and tried to read, but it did not arouse his interest. Suddenly he remembered that in his pocket were the papers and memoranda which he had extracted from the professor's black bag, on Monday night, in the laboratory. This was the first opportunity he had found to examine them thoroughly, and he now took out his pocket-book and proceeded to look them over.

They were a mixed lot of papers; notes that meant nothing to Detective Sullivan, and which he put aside as Greek, but which were really algebraic formulæ, scribblings on odd bits of paper, random writings intelligible only to the writer. But there were also some newspaper clippings, and the detective thought these might tell him something.

It was dull reading, however, and only one thing about the lot of clippings interested him. They were all on one subject—scientific experiments, reports, news and dry gossip, all on one subject—the new metal, Radium.

Finally he gave up trying to make anything out of them by himself, though he reached the conclusion that they might be very useful if looked over by somebody who knew more about what they meant. He decided to work his case out on common-sense lines, and not to try to mix science with them.

"I might show these things to the Dean when I get back to Graydon," he thought. "That is, if it's necessary. I ain't so sure that I won't close it all up before I get back from New York. Gordon and the girl aren't going there for nothing, you can bet on that—and whatever either of 'em does isn't so far removed from Hopkins."

To the detective these clippings were dull and uninteresting, and he was about to replace them in the pocket-book, when suddenly he remembered something, and blushed



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to think that he had not recalled it before. The incident of the strange radiance of his diamond scarf pin that night in the woods back of the college! What a fool he was not to have understood what caused it! He remembered to have read, on more than one occasion, of the effect of radium on diamonds, and it now became a certainty in his mind that the refulgence of his gem had been occasioned by the presence, somewhere, of some radio-active substance.

"With radium at \$5,000 an ounce, though," commented Sullivan, "it don't seem likely that there would be any great amount of it lying around loose out there in the woods. I wonder if there was some in the laboratory? No; if there had been wouldn't my diamond have shone when I was there? And the light disappeared the moment I got away from that one spot in the woods. Maybe there's a radium mine there."

This flippant dismissal of the question did not satisfy him, however. He could not disassociate the matter from Professor Hopkins.

The fact that Hopkins, judging by these papers of his, was intensely interested in matters connected with radium may have had something to do with the way the detective looked at it; he was convinced, however, that there was something more than mere coincidence in it all.

"I wish I had told the Dean about the diamond business," he thought. "I will when I get back—if it's necessary."

He had an idea that this journey to New York would bring matters to a head. He did not expect to find Hopkins there, but he hoped to trap Gordon and the girl in some manner that would force her to make a full confession of all he wanted to know.

Sullivan arrived in New York hungry. The dining-car was ahead of the car in which Ernesta and Gordon rode. He had noted that with satisfaction at first, because it would preclude the chance of their having to pass through his car to dinner. The arrangement worked ill on his appetite, however, for it prevented him going forward. He was not in

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a good frame of mind, as a consequence, when they pulled in at the Grand Central Station.

He watched Gordon and the girl alight, and saw them go to a hotel across the street. Sullivan watched them enter the café, a few steps beneath the sidewalk, and take a seat at a table near a large post. He wondered if there were not some way he could obtain a table near them, and he went in the main entrance of the hotel to reconnoitre. After some search he found that he could go through the men's café and into the dining-room where they were seated, without being seen by them, the post hiding him. He also observed with joy that a table on the opposite side of the post was unoccupied. In another moment he was seated, and had ordered something to eat. Then he listened, trying to overhear anything that they might say. What he heard was this:

"You positively insist, then?" It was Gordon speaking.

"I do, positively," said the girl. "You

have trusted me thus far; why not a little further? Rather than tell you now my purpose in coming to New York, the reason I had to have the money and who gave it to me in the first place, I would take the train back to Graydon, even though that would certainly cause the death of—of somebody who trusts me. Don't think me cruel; don't misunderstand me in any way. I love you, George, and would tell you anything else you might ask. But in this I have given my word and must keep it."

There was silence for a little, before Gordon spoke. He said:

"Very well, Ernesta. I have nothing to do but to trust you. Inasmuch as you told me from the beginning that I would get no explanation of your strange actions until the proper time, it would be illogical for me to insist on it at this late hour. I must continue to trust you. But—but I wish I knew."

"You must wait!"

"Until—until—when we are married?"

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"Yes; when we are married I will tell you all. And it will be nothing that you will regret hearing."

"I will wait."

For some time there was nothing more said. The detective was glad, for he was very busy, eating. But when he again heard the voice of Gordon he laid down his knife and fork and strained his ears to catch the words. Gordon said:

"I don't know what you mean?" Evidently, thought Sullivan, a reply to some question of the girl's.

"I believe you do," she said. "There is something on your mind, on your conscience. Several times when I have watched you I have seen you jump, as though you saw something. You act like a man afraid of—of course I don't know what; but I am sure there is something. Won't you tell me?"

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Gordon. "There is nothing on my conscience—nothing." He made a brave effort to laugh, but the attempt was a failure.

"He don't fool me," thought the detective.  
"He's in bad, somehow."

Ernesta hesitated.

"I am not deceived, George," she said. "I know you are keeping something from me. Tell me, is it—is it anything about the gossip concerning my leaving Graydon so hurriedly?"

"Nothing that concerns you," said he. His reply convinced her all the more fully that there was *something*. If she could only have guessed the truth! If she could only have seen the pictures that continually haunted Gordon; pictures of Hopkins! In some of them he was lying as they had left him, heaped over with sawdust and boards. In others he was rising from the pile and coming toward the group of cowering professors, with accusing finger and mocking smile. Indeed, there was something on Gordon's mind!

"Very well," said Ernesta, after a pause, "if you won't tell me I can't help you. Whatever it is, will you promise to let me know what it is when—when we are married?"

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"I promise," said he. He added, as though to change the subject: "By the way, where have you decided to stay to-night?"

Ernesta named a hotel well-known to New England folk from rural districts, adding:

"And you?"

"I had not thought," said Gordon. "I will find a hotel, somewhere. I must write to Dean Quimby before it is too late to get the letter in the last mail. He must hear from me in the morning. If you are willing, I will now see you to your hotel, and make arrangements for meeting you to-morrow."

"I don't know how to plan for to-morrow exactly," said the girl. "I shall go to see—to the necessary place as early as possible. 'About nine o'clock, I guess. My business will not take long. After that——"

"After that, suppose I meet you," said Gordon. "If you will suggest a place. How about right at the place you are going to?"

She dissented so quickly that Gordon was suspicious.

"No! No," she said. "Not right there; but—in Madison Square, at ten o'clock. Will you be there?"

"Anywhere you wish," said Gordon coolly. "Now, shall we go?"

They had paid their check, so that there was no delay. Sullivan had not counted on how they would go out from the café, and when they turned his side of the post it was too late for him to get out of the way. Gordon did not appear to notice him, but Ernesta did, and though Sullivan knew that she could not have recognised him, never having seen him, he could not account for the startled look she gave him as she passed.

"I wonder if I imagined it," said he to himself, "or if she really did look at me as though she had seen me before."

He did not rise to follow them at once. In short, he had no intention of trying to keep on their track to-night, for he knew where to find Ernesta, and was sure that as long as she was in New York, Gordon would not try to get away. In the course of a quarter of



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an hour the detective left the café and strolled over to Broadway. Leisurely he walked down that thoroughfare until he reached the hotel at which Ernesta had signified her intention of staying. He went in and looked at the register. Her name was on it in a feminine hand. He smiled.

"Well," said he, "I guess I might as well go to bed now. And here's as good a place as any."

He signed his name to the book—"John McConnell, Pittsburg, Penn.," and was assigned to a room.

"Leave a call for me at seven o'clock," he said. He did not notice the number of the room given him, but went to bed.

He slept well, and awakened in the morning with a clear head and a body full of energy. As he left his room a young woman came out of the one next to his, and went rapidly down the hall. As she passed the detective's door he was standing inside, fixing the spring lock. She gave a fleeting glance in his direction, and uttered a fright-

ened little cry. Before he could see her face she had passed, but one glance at the back of the fleeting figure made him recede into his room with an exclamation of surprise.

"By all the gods!" he said to himself, "if I haven't had the next room to her!"

He was afraid she had recognised him. Surely the careful glance she had given him the night previous would be enough to make her remember him if she had never seen him before that occasion. Now the fact of finding him here, in such a place that she must know he was shadowing her, would arouse all sorts of suspicions in her breast.

"I'll keep out of her sight from now on," he thought. He realised that he must now give up his intention of following her to Madison Square. He might stay around the park and try to see her when she met Gordon at ten o'clock, however. So he had breakfast and strolled down in the direction of Twenty-third Street.

He watched Madison Square from half past nine to nearly eleven o'clock. No signs of

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either Ernesta or Gordon. As the minutes sped by and they did not come, the detective's confidence in their ultimate appearance began to wane. At last he was convinced that he had been hoodwinked. Either they had known that he had been listening during their meal at the hotel, the night before, and led him on a false scent, or else the girl's view of him this morning had made her suspicious and altered her plans.

At last, Sullivan, utterly crushed and ashamed of himself, left the Square. He went back to the hotel and looked around. There was no Ernesta, no Gordon! He asked the clerk if Miss Frost had given up her room, and found that, as she had arrived with no baggage, the night before, she had paid in advance for one day only.

"Tricked!" said Sullivan to himself in extreme anger at his idiocy. "Tricked! My trip for nothing, and further than ever from the Hopkins case solution! I'll never dare go back to Boston or Graydon!"

The day brought forth nothing to him. He

roamed the streets in the one chance that in all the millions of people he might be able to find either Gordon or Ernesta Frost. Such encounters occur only when least desired, in New York, however, and wearily, sadly, shamefacedly, Sullivan re-entered the hotel at dinner time and took a seat in the men's café, whence he could watch the lobby of the hotel. There was one little hope remaining—perhaps something had come up to delay the girl another night! It was a faint hope, but the only one he had to fall back on.

Sullivan ate his dinner moodily, with a paper before him. He was just about to rise, when he saw Ernesta enter the front door of the hotel. He could have shouted with delight. The girl was followed by Gordon, who carried a valise, a new one, which he handed to her, and she went to the desk to register. Then she spoke a few words to Gordon, and went into the elevator. Sullivan saw Gordon, a smile of happiness on his face, cross to the news stand and buy an evening paper. Then, selecting a seat in the lobby, fortunately so

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situated that Sullivan could watch his every movement without himself being seen, he sat down and began to read.

"She's gone upstairs to change her clothes," thought the detective. "She bought that bag to-day, that's sure, and probably some finery—a waist or something. He's waiting for her to come down again. I'll just keep an eye on him."

Gordon read the headlines on the first page carelessly, looking up at the clock every few minutes, as though impatient at the slow passing of the time. Suddenly Sullivan saw him start, clutch the page which he held so tightly that he tore the paper and made those sitting near him look at him in surprise. His eyes were fastened on a paragraph at the bottom of the first page. He read it searchingly, and then, with his mouth forming an exclamation, and his face wearing an expression which denoted that he had seen something which caused him fear or pain, he leaped to his feet and began to walk up and down the lobby in extreme nervousness.

"What in the dickens has he just read?" thought Sullivan. "Let's see—what paper was that?" He could read the heading as Gordon still held the paper clutched in one hand. Sullivan hurried out to the news stand on the sidewalk, through the café door, and bought a paper like Gordon's. Then, standing where he could still see the man in the lobby, he read the headlines on the flaring page. Near the bottom of a column he saw this:

"PROF. ALBERT RASSIGNOL ARRIVES."

"Albert Rassignol?" thought Sullivan. "Where have I heard that name before? By George, I know! The young Frenchman that used to be at Graydon—that Ernesta was in love with! So! He's back in America, and Gordon didn't know it till he saw it in the paper! No wonder he was shocked! Look at him—he's like a crazy man! What's he asking the clerk? To find out if Miss Frost isn't ready, I'll bet. He can't wait to call her for what she's done. I don't blame him, either!

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By George, but that girl's a wonder! Elopes with old Hopkins, shakes him, gets Gordon to join her so she can cash old Hopkins' check for five thousand dollars—and now she's making ready to give Gordon the go-by and run away with the Frenchman, her first love! Here she comes!"

A sudden move of Gordon's toward the elevator in the hotel caught his attention. The elevator opened, and from it emerged Ernesta. She had changed her waist and hat, and looked extremely pretty—prettier even than she had yet appeared to the detective. Her face wore a happy smile as she stepped toward Gordon, but as she caught his expression the smile gave way first to a look of surprise, then of horror. He caught her by the arm, before she could speak, and, before the lobby full of people, he held the crumpled paper up so that she could read. Sullivan, in the meanwhile, had hurried into the café and stood at the door, so that he could hear what was being said.

"George! George!" cried Ernesta, strug-

gling to free her arm from his grasp. "What is the matter? Are you crazy?"

"Crazy!" Gordon hissed through his teeth.

"Crazy! Why shouldn't I be? Read that?"

He shook the paper before Ernesta's eyes. She could not see the dancing type.

"Read what?" she demanded.

"So," he went on, "so, you have come to New York to meet him, have you? Albert Rassignol! That's it, is it? Well, you can meet him if you want to. But you can't play me as false as you think."

"George, listen," pleaded the girl, looking around in terror, lest the man's loud voice should be overheard. "Be calm, George!"

"Calm!" hissed Gordon. "You ask me to be calm, after the way you have treated me! I'll——" she had led him, by now, to a more secluded part of the lobby, where they were less liable to be overheard. But Sullivan, by straining his ears, could catch their words. "You've tried to play me false, Ernesta, and I know it all. Yes, you have," he went on as she protested. "This paper has shown me



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what you've tried to keep from me. Albert Rassinol is here. So that's why you wanted my five thousand dollars and made me give it to you! You wanted it for him! Well, you shan't have it. I demand that you give it back to me at once."

"Impossible," cried the girl. "Oh, George, you don't understand, you don't believe me. You can't believe what you're saying about me. You're wrong."

"Tell me, then, isn't he in New York? Didn't you come here to meet him?"

"Yes, but——"

"Ah, so you confess it all! Oh, Ernesta, how could you? How could you?"

"George!" She laid her hand on his sleeve and looked up into his eyes. Her steady glance quieted him. He stopped, panting in his emotion. She led him to a chair and they sat down. Sullivan could hear no more, but he could see that Ernesta was speaking fervently. He saw the look of rage and wildness on Gordon's face gradually soften. Then they rose, and Ernesta put out her hand to

her companion. He took it, and smiled. They left the hotel together.

Sullivan looked after them.

"Well, by George!" was all he could say, as he entered the bar to take something to brace himself.

And at various times during the evening until they returned, he said the same thing again. Ernesta came back to the hotel accompanied to the door by Gordon, who left her. She went directly upstairs.

The next morning, Sullivan, who had made it a point to have his room located in a part of the hotel where Ernesta would not be so liable to discover him, was up early after a night spent in fruitless speculation. He kept an eye on the hotel from a doorway across the street. About half past eight, he saw Ernesta come out alone. She did not take a car but walked and Sullivan followed. She went down Broadway to Madison Square, and the detective guessed that he had hit it right. She had to go back to the place where she was to transact the business which had

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brought her to New York. He saw her enter one of the big buildings on Twenty-third Street, and breathed a sigh of relief. Then he proceeded to watch for Gordon, knowing that he would not be far away.

At a little before ten he bought a paper and sat down on a bench to read. He had hardly glanced at the first page when he saw something that made his eyes nearly burst from their sockets. It was this:

### THE GRAYDON GHOST

Ghastly Visitation That Has Upset A Peaceful New England College Town!

GRAYDON, MASS., May 20—This town has a ghost or something so near to it that the inhabitants are thoroughly alarmed. It made its first appearance yesterday, when it began to bewitch the waters in Bradley's ice-pond, a hitherto respectable body of water on the hill near Graydon College. Small boys discovered the fact that the water had suddenly become possessed of a tingling sensation, and the town was immediately alarmed over the occurrence.

Last night the ghost was seen, and this time by a blind man! Strange as this may seem, it is declared to be a fact. The man is Dan Hawkins, a sober musician, who lost his sight five years ago. He was return-

ing from a suburb when he suddenly perceived a human body moving along a few feet from the ground. He has not been able to tell more about it, but will probably when he recovers from the shock.

But the climax was reached this evening when a strange light appeared over Cemetery Hill, a little out of the town. It is now shining in a ghostly fashion and the entire population is looking at it and wondering what it is. Some suggest one thing and others another, but no conclusion can be reached. In the absence of Professor Hopkins, of Graydon College, who is an authority on anything of the kind, the rest of Graydon is entirely at sea in its efforts to account for the strange series of manifestations.

The detective had just finished the article when he was startled by hearing a voice exclaim:

“Look! That’s the man!”

Looking up he saw Ernesta Frost and Gordon. The former was pointing at the detective, and Gordon was coming toward him. But as their eyes met, the professor drew back, his face livid with fear.

“No, no,” he cried. “I didn’t do it! It was not my fault! It was Snyder, I tell you! You shall not touch me. I—I——”

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He paused, looking from Ernesta to Sullivan. Then, with the exclamation, "Come!" he caught the girl by the arm and rushed madly from the park, across the grass, to Broadway.

They jumped into a taxicab and were away before Sullivan had overcome his astonishment at the proceedings sufficiently to rise from the bench and rush after them.

A more befogged, bewildered detective never followed an escaping couple than Sullivan, as he climbed into a second taxi and told the chauffeur to get there, wherever it might be, before the first one. "Never mind the speed laws," he shouted, "you simply go!"

The chauffeur sped up Fifth Avenue, dodging carriages, automobiles and pedestrians with a nicety that would have elicited Sullivan's boundless admiration under other circumstances.

He gained on Gordon's cab and by the time Thirty-fourth Street was reached the detective had the satisfaction of seeing the collegian

stand up in his vehicle and look back, fearful that he would not be able to escape.

"Keep right after them," said Sullivan. "You've got 'em!"

"Sure, if the cops don't get me," replied the chauffeur.

Sullivan was held up by the traffic regulations at Thirty-fourth Street, and Gordon gained considerable. But, on being released at the crossing the detective's man put on more speed, and cut down the distance between pursued and pursuer at a rapid rate. When Gordon's machine reached Forty-second Street it turned in to the east.

"It's Grand Central, sure enough," said Sullivan. "Get them, old man, get them, sure!"

The chauffeur could not answer; he was busily engaged in turning the corner without capsizing his machine. He did it by a narrow margin, and dashed down Forty-second Street to the railroad station. Fast as he had been, however, when he reached the entrance on Vanderbilt Avenue and Sullivan

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jumped out, throwing the man a bill and telling him to keep the change, Gordon and Ernesta had vanished. The detective rushed into the station, momentarily baffled but by no means beaten. He saw Gordon just leaving the ticket window. Sullivan guessed what had occurred and was the next man at the wicket.

"Boston! Quick!" he shouted, shoving a five dollar bill through.

"You've got to run," said the ticket seller, giving him the ticket, and Sullivan did. He was not a light-weight by any means, but he fairly flew across the tessalated floor of the waiting-room toward the station platform. As Gordon pushed Ernesta 'through the swinging door, Sullivan followed, dodging through the doorway on the rebound of the door. He was so near the fleeing couple, that Gordon may have heard him. At any rate, he turned, and as Sullivan came flying across the platform, the young professor's fist shot out, catching the detective full in the face. Sullivan heard Ernesta's scream of horror, he

felt the impact and then went sprawling on the pavement.

Half a dozen porters rushed to his aid, but he was up before they reached him.

"I'm all right," he bellowed. "Don't touch me!"

He rushed through the gate, defying the efforts of the guard to examine his ticket, and threw himself aboard the platform of the last car, as the train pulled out. He rose to his feet, felt for his hat, and found that it was lost; put his hand to his mouth and drew it away with a grimace of pain. Then he turned the knob of the car door and went inside, battered and bruised, but triumphant and burning with wrath and a craving for vengeance.

"I'll settle with him for that!" he muttered. "Yes, and I'll settle with him now!"

All the fighting blood of a long line of Irish ancestors was boiling within Sullivan as he strode through the cars, scanning the face of every passenger. Car after car he traversed, but no Gordon, no Ernesta! But he would find them. They could not hide from him!



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He tried another door. It did not open. A brakeman said:

"Here, you can't go in there! That's the mail car!"

"Well," growled Sullivan, "what's ahead of it?"

"The engine," said the brakeman.

The detective swayed, caught for support at the guard rail, and, as the brakeman led him back into the car he had just come from, he went weakly, crushed, outwitted!

THE JOURNEY IN THE DARK



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE JOURNEY IN THE DARK

PROFESSOR SNYDER'S wife was made of different material from Mrs. Hopkins and insisted always in taking intense interest in anything connected with the college or her husband's profession. It was, therefore, no simple matter for him to make a satisfactory excuse to leave home on Tuesday evening. At length he succeeded in convincing Mrs. Snyder that it would be absolutely necessary for him to meet Professors Fischer and Rice at the college in the neighbourhood of ten o'clock for the purpose of investigating some astronomical phenomena that were scheduled to manifest themselves at that hour.

Whether Mrs. Snyder believed her husband's extemporaneous story or not does not matter. Probably she did, for he had grown wonderfully experienced in mendacity during the last forty-eight hours, and whereas, a

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week previous, he could not have told her such a bare-faced lie without blushing, he now had no difficulty in delivering it with a direct gaze and a nonchalant air.

Rice and Fischer were at the rendezvous before him, the former cool, the latter nervous and petulant. Moreover, they had already procured the wheelbarrow—the same vehicle in use the night before—and the spade. Snyder saw something in a pile in the bottom of the barrow, and shuddered.

“Is it—have you already taken the body from the ice-house?” he asked.

“No,” growled Fischer, “dose are blankets to wrap it up in. Come, take hold of der handles!”

Willy-nilly, Snyder found himself wheeling the barrow over the same old path to the ice-house. Rice stalked ahead, carrying the spade over his shoulder. Fischer walked at one side, resolutely. Not a word was said until they reached the ice-house.

“Now,” whispered Rice, “put it down.”

Snyder dropped the handles of the wheelbarrow and followed Rice and Fischer inside the ice-house. It was dark. Rather, it would have been but for that awful light in the corner where lay the body of Professor Hopkins. Instead of the refulgence having diminished in the twenty-four hours the body had lain there, it was apparent to their startled eyes that it had increased. It now shone through the blue print paper, the sawdust and the boards.

"My, my!" exclaimed Rice. "It is lucky we came. By to-morrow morning it would even show in the daylight!"

Swiftly they went to work, pulling the boards away and scooping the sawdust from the bundle. Then they dragged it out upon the floor and stripped it of the blue print paper. They turned their eyes away as they threw the blankets over it, and, though this covering shut in the dreadful light more effectually than the paper had done at its best, they placed the burden in the wheelbarrow

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without once looking at it. Over it they laid more blankets. Then Rice said:

“Now, follow me.”

Snyder would have rebelled against once more acting in the capacity of a hearse horse, but he felt the mastery of Fischer and Rice, and meekly bent to his task. Along the edge of the ice-pond they went, across a ploughed field and down a steep hill through some woods, the wheelbarrow bumping against tangled roots and sinking hub deep into furrows. Fischer now and then lent a hand in helping the perspiring Snyder to extricate the vehicle, but Rice always walked ahead.

At length the road was reached; the road somewhat beyond the town proper, where houses ceased and there were thick trees on one side. On the other there was a stone wall, and behind this a thick hedge of hawthorn trees. Snyder shuddered as the fragrance of these fell upon his senses. He knew the scent. It reminded him of the cemetery. It was the cemetery, in fact, and that was their destination.

It was better travelling now, but Snyder made wretched time. His arms refused to hold the barrow up any longer, and finally he was obliged to set it down.

"Come on," said Rice, brusquely.

"I cannot," pleaded Snyder, "I am too tired!"

"Den gif it to me," said Fischer, and stepped into Snyder's place between the shafts. Then they resumed their journey. Suddenly something dashed by them from the woods on their left. It was too dark for them to distinguish what it was, but it uttered a guttural sound as it flew by, and waved its arms, if they were arms. And it struck Snyder on the head with something which it carried in one of its hands—if they were hands—struck him full on the head, crushing his hat down over his eyes. There was a sound of splintering wood, and then—then there was nothing, except three absolutely panic-stricken human beings.

They were too frightened to run. Their knees would not have supported them. And



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for some time they could not even speak. Rice found his tongue at last and whispered:

"What was it?"

"It went too fast!" said Fischer.

"It must have been an animal—a cow or a horse," said Rice.

"No," said Snyder, "because it struck me. See, my hat is knocked down over my ears!"

"Impossible!" said Rice. "It couldn't have been a man, or it would have spoken. It must have been a stray cow."

"But," faltered Snyder, "my hat——"

"It's tail hit you," said Fischer. "Come along!"

He stooped to take up the load again, but even Rice was too frightened to resume the journey just then.

"No, wait," he commanded. "We must make sure!"

And then one of those fortuitous things occurred that are so improbable as to prove that it is only the improbable that always happens. They heard a faint "Moo!" It was from a field near at hand. A sigh of infinite relief

escaped from the breasts of the three simultaneously.

"Thank heaven, it was a cow!" said Rice. His tone was actually cheery now as he said, briskly:

"Come on!"

They passed through the open gate of the old cemetery. They went along a road peopled on either side by those whom they had known and loved in years gone by. They passed monuments over the graves of those at whose biers they had shed tears. On, on, up, up, till even the athletic Fischer puffed under the strenuosity of his task. Finally they reached the crown of the hill. Behind them stretched the city of the gathered-in. In front of them a wall of cedars. Directly at their feet was a vault, covered with a mausoleum of white stone.

"This is the place," said Rice. "It is my vault. There is nobody in it—yet."

They lifted the blanketed bundle from the wheelbarrow and placed it inside the tomb. There was no door to the structure, which

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was not quite finished, but the opening was on the side away from the town and facing the wall of cedars.

They said no requiem, they spoke no prayer; they did pray, however, but silently, and their prayers were not for the man whom they laid away, but for themselves.

Silently they made their way back to the village. The wheelbarrow must be disposed of. Fischer volunteered to attend to that duty.

"You go home to your wives," he said. "I'll put this back."

So they left him at the foot of the hill that led up to the college grounds by way of the ice-pond, and went to their homes. Fischer made the rest of the journey alone.

Mrs. Snyder had sat up for her husband.

"Well," she asked when he came in, "did the astronomical phenomena manifest themselves?"

"Slightly, my dear, slightly."

"Do you think to-morrow night will be more favourable for them?"

"I cannot tell, my dear, I cannot tell!" said Snyder. Sincerely he hoped that it would not be.

But, as we know, the next night was notable for the strangeness of phenomena! Phenomena that exhibited themselves in the heavens above the crest of Cemetery Hill. And among those who witnessed them from afar the unhappy trio were by all means the most interested.

"My dear," asked Mrs. Snyder, when, after supper, her attention was called to the strange glare in the sky, "My dear, do you suppose that this is the phenomenon you were looking for last night?"

"I wouldn't care to say so, decisively," replied the professor, his words coming with a great effort. "I cannot tell. I—I think I will go and consult with Professors Rice and Fischer!"

He stumbled from the house and went in search of his fellow conspirators. He found Rice standing in the street, looking breathlessly out toward the cemetery.

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"Rice, my God!" cried Snyder, falling against the other.

"Horrible! Horrible!" said Rice. "Snyder, I fear that we have made a terrible mistake! We have not acted like reasoning men. We have—great heavens! What have we done? What impelled us to act in that way?"

Fischer found them there. His swarthy face was drawn and tense with the fear within him.

"Vell?" he asked, as he approached. Then, as there was no answer, again "Vell?"

"I don't know," muttered Rice.

Their agony was augmented by the appearance of acquaintances, who appealed to them for explanations of the unusual glow. They heard with shivers of terror the occasional suggestions that "Somebody ought to go over and see what it is!" They feared,—though they had little reason to—that someone would actually make the journey. Not until very late did they go home, and many times during the night they rose from their beds and went to the window to see if the light still shone.

. It did. Nothing but the dawn dispelled it. With the rising of the sun, their hopes temporarily rose, and when they met at the college they were in a better state of mind to consider their predicament, which, they all agreed, was now desperate.



## **THE DEAN'S TELEGRAM**





## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### THE DEAN'S TELEGRAM

"GENTLEMEN," said Rice, at the first moment the trio had an opportunity of conferring, "I have given the matter careful consideration since last we met. I have concluded—and I am certain that you will agree with me—that affairs have reached a crisis. Am I right?"

Fischer and Snyder nodded assent. Rice continued:

"In some way or other, I have been forced, thus far, into the leadership in all things connected with this unfortunate affair. I now wish to take a back seat in the deliberations. But not on account of a desire to shirk any responsibilities, I assure you; simply because I do not think that my judgment is good, and because I believe that if you expect to find a way out of our troubles, you must let some other head govern. However, before I step

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down, let me say this: We have now come to a point where further beating about the bush is impossible. - Either to-night the body will be discovered, or we must dispose of it so that no traces of it can be found."

Snyder shifted uneasily in his seat.

"There is but one other course open to us," Rice went on. Snyder looked hopeful. Could it be that Rice had solved the problem? Was there a ray of sunshine somewhere? The mathematician's next words dashed his hopes to the ground. "We can appear before the proper authorities, confess our complicity in the—er—crime, and let the law take its course."

Fischer grunted. Snyder shrunk. He looked at Rice with a horror-stricken countenance.

"The law?" he repeated.

"The law," said Rice coolly. "I am not versed in legal matters, but I am morally certain that the things which we have done have placed us within the pale of the law. I am morally certain that we are guilty of crimes sufficient to place us in the penitentiary."

"Or de madhouse!" said Fischer.

"Or the madhouse," agreed Rice. "I myself incline to the belief that a court, hearing our story, would immediately decide that we were insane. I have no doubt that we have been, since—since the beginning of the unfortunate affair. I——"

"Hold on," said Fischer, impatiently, "Vat if ve are insane or criminals? Ve don't vish to be punished as either. I swear I don't, if I can help it!"

Rice smiled.

"Dr. Fischer," said he, "I judge that you have a suggestion to make. In that case I am perfectly willing to let you take the leadership." He sat down with an air of resignation and proceeded to listen to the German, who was not loath to speak.

"Vell," said Fischer, "so be it. You say the body vill surely be found by to-night. It vill, if der glow does not subside. And I don't think it vill. So! Vat is to be done? Dis!" He leaned forward in his chair, his sharp blue eyes fixed on Rice and Snyder. He held

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one hand a few inches above the desk at his side. At the conclusion of each word in his next statement he brought his hand down with a smart blow on the desk, making the intervals dramatic pauses. What he said was this:

“Let *us* find der body!”

“What!” Rice and Snyder spoke in unison, but their word was in the manner of an exclamation, not an interrogation. They both caught Fischer’s meaning at once.

“I mean,” the German continued, “as long as somebody has got to find it, let us. Let us lead a searching party. Let us, as scientists, volunteer to find out vat der strange glow is. Und den—vell?” He waved his hand as though dispelling every cloud that now dimmed their horizon, and sank back into his chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

“Fischer,” said Rice, “you have solved it! You have solved it!”

“You have saved our lives,” declared Snyder.

"Ugh!" said Fischer, trying to look modest.

It was agreed then, that that was to be their method of procedure, and they went about their day's work with the lightest hearts they had known in many hours. Dean Quimby noted the change of demeanour in his associates, and was at a loss to account for it. Had they heard from Hopkins? Was the wandering scholar coming back? What was it? He wished that Sullivan were in Graydon, so that he could confer with him.

During the day the Dean received two very important communications. One was from Professor Gordon, a letter dated New York, and sent by special delivery. It ran as follows:

*"My dear Dean:*

"I am writing to beg your pardon for my sudden departure from Graydon yesterday. It was entirely unexpected and I cannot fully explain it in this letter. I assure you, however, that it was absolutely necessary, as I shall convince you upon my return.

"I say 'upon my return,' but I do not know whether I

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shall return. At least, I cannot say with absolute certainty when it will take place. I am undergoing a course of severe mental torture, the nature of which I cannot confide in you. The result may be that I shall return to-day; perhaps not for some days. Perhaps, but I trust not, never.

"In any case, I beg that you will believe that anything which I have done, anything that you may hear that I have done, has been done from the best motives. Furthermore, if I may speak for another, let me assure you that the disgraceful gossip concerning an estimable young lady of the college and Professor Hopkins is with absolutely no foundation.

"I beg your pardon for this ungainly effusion; I wish I could say what is in me to say; but I cannot. Whatever happens, my esteemed sir, I thank you for your many kindnesses to me, and beg to be allowed to sign myself,

"Yours sincerely,

"GEORGE GORDON."

When the Dean had read and re-read this letter half a dozen times, he wiped his glasses, sighed and said:

"I really *do* wish that detective were here!"

As the next best thing, there came a telegram from Sullivan. It said:

## THE DEAN'S TELEGRAM 267

*"Get samples of ice-pond water. Investigate story of Dan Hawkins about seeing ghost. Have books on radium ready for me and watch Fischer, Snyder and Rice. Astounding developments in Hopkins case. Will arrive six forty-five."*

"Bless me!" exclaimed the Dean. "What's the matter? Watch Snyder, Rice and Fischer! Good Lord! What a marvellous man, to know already that there is a change in those professors since yesterday! Where was the telegram from? Stamford, Conn. He must have travelled further than he expected. And Gordon's letter from New York! Maybe Sullivan—— Pshaw! This is no matter for me to try and figure out. I simply cannot! Oh, I wish that he would arrive!"

But he followed out Sullivan's request—or instruction—to the letter, and obtained from the college library all the literature on Radium that it contained. He even asked some of the professors if they had any volumes on the subject. When he chanced to meet Snyder in the hall and asked him, the Dean was surprised at the other's actions. Snyder came along the hall looking quite cheerful, for him.



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Certainly he appeared to be in a better frame of mind than the Dean had seen him during the first part of the week. He greeted the Dean with a cordial "Good-morning," and was about to pass, when the Dean said:

"Oh, by the way, Professor Snyder, do you happen to have any books on Radium in your room?"

Snyder's face turned the colour of parchment. He looked at the Dean with glassy eyes. He stammered something to the effect that he didn't know anything about the new metal, and fled precipitately, leaving the older man looking after him in open-mouthed wonder.

"Watch Snyder!" said the Dean to himself. "I should think he ought to be watched. He's insane!"

It did not surprise the gardener to have the Dean direct him to go over to Bradley's ice-pond and fill two or three glass jars and a wooden pail with water. Everyone in town was excited over the ice-pond water, and quite naturally, the Dean, being a man of science,

would want someone to analyse it. But it did rather astonish the gardener when the dignified head of the college sent for the man to come to his study and said confidentially:

"I wish you would run down to the inn and see if there's some sort of story going the rounds about Dan Hawkins—the blind musician—seeing a ghost or something. I would like to know, because—for personal reasons."

"Yes, sir," said the gardener. "If I find Hawkins, I shall bring him up here."

"No," said the Dean. "I say, though, you might ask him to call at my house to-night, about seven o'clock. You needn't say why. And you may as well take that water to my house too."

Nothing else of importance happened during the day, and the Dean went home at his usual hour. He had his supper, and then retired to his study to await the arrival of Detective Sullivan. Had the detective been prompt to his appointment, he would have seen an interesting picture in this room. The

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Dean sat at his desk, which was piled high with heavy volumes, all dealing, to judge from their titles, with radium and its kindred elements. On the floor near him reposed several fruit jars and a large bucket filled with water of a muddy hue. Opposite him sat Dan Hawkins, staring with sightless sockets, straight ahead, and chafing under the silence imposed upon him by the Dean, who had asked him to refrain from repeating his wonderful story until another guest should have come. Now and then the Dean looked at his watch and wondered what was detaining the detective.

As a matter of fact, Sullivan had been in Graydon for some time previous to this. When he had been able to collect himself sufficiently to reason clearly, after sending the telegram to the Dean from Stamford, he found that the train would not stop at the junction where connections could be made for Graydon. Therefore, he would have to go on to Boston, and would not be able to get to the college town that night. This would not do. By further inquiry he learned that he could

get off at a stop within forty miles of Graydon, and, by careful manipulation of the trolley schedule, not only reach his destination as quickly as though he had been able to make the railroad connection, but a full hour sooner. It would require a walk of a little over a mile from the end of the trolley, but he did not mind that.

A few minutes before six, therefore, found him approaching Graydon from a direction opposite to the railroad station. His road would take him past the college grounds and down the hill into the village. The college was silent, the last person having left it for the day. Sullivan looked at the building and his manner resumed the fierceness that had come over it at the moment he had found that Gordon and Ernesta were not aboard the train. His lips were still swollen from the blow which the young professor had struck him, and his eyes gleamed with a bitter hatred from under the brim of a hat much too large for his head, which he had borrowed from a brakeman.

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"I've got them! I've got them dead right!" he muttered; "and I'd like to clean the job up to-night!"

A ray of the setting sun fell upon the diamond in his scarf and for a moment he imagined that once more the jewel was under the influence of the strange power that had made it shine out in the woods on Monday night. He soon realised that this was not so, but the incident recalled to his mind the fact that he was only a few rods from the ice-pond. As he was ahead of his schedule he thought he would go off his course a little and make a personal inspection of the water about whose strange actions he had read in the morning paper.

So he turned to the left and traversed the short tract of woods until he came out upon the pond at a point near the ice-house. The grass showed evidence of having been tramped by many feet, and broken bottles and empty tins scattered along the bank told the story of events of the past few hours. The detective noticed all this, and dipped his hand in the

water. To the touch it was just like any other water, and he could not detect any strange tingling such as the paper had described.

As a matter of fact, the condition had worn off by this time, and Bradley's ice-pond was the same as of old. Disappointed, but more eager than ever to find out some clue that would lead to the consummation of his efforts to solve the mystery, Sullivan stood up and looked about. The ice-house caught his attention.

On entering, almost the first thing to meet his eyes was a pile of boards in one corner, about which was sprinkled a good deal of sawdust.

"Aha!" said he, thinking of the few grains of the same material which still remained in his vest pocket. Behind the boards, as he pulled them away from the wall, he found a quantity of strange bluish paper, and a lot of string, knotted and tangled, evidently the covering taken from some large bundle. He pulled the paper out on the floor and spread

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a piece of it flat. It was still light enough in the ice-house to detect on the surface of the paper some peculiar markings, blurred and indistinct, but suggesting a photographic imprint, though of what object he had no idea. Suddenly one spot on the paper made him gasp. It distinctly resembled a human eye! Frantically he examined all the other pieces of paper, and found them all more or less marked with these same blurrish spots. What he imagined them to be he could not himself have told, but he was certain that they told some story if he could only unravel it. He gathered the sheets of paper together, and rolled up the twine, which he stuffed in his pocket. Then he hurried out of the building, with the paper shoved up under his coat which he buttoned tightly.

At the foot of the college hill he encountered Mrs. Hopkins. The woman was walking like a person asleep, her hollow eyes looking straight ahead but seeing nothing. Her gaunt, haggard appearance betokened the loss of sleep, and hours spent in mental suffering.

At first she did not see the detective, and would have passed on, but he spoke to her. She stopped, gazed at him in a dazed way, and then, suddenly recognising him, flew to him with a cry of inquiry.

"Oh, Mr. Sullivan!" she exclaimed. "Where have you been? And what have you found out? Where is he? Oh, where is he?"

"Calm yourself, madam," said Sullivan; "I have been away on mighty important business. As to where your husband is——"

"Tell me, tell me!" she pleaded.

"Well," he was obliged to confess, "I can't, that is, exactly. But I can assure you, madam, that he isn't so far off, and you may get word of him most any time now."

"Oh!" she cried, eagerly, "he is coming back! He is coming back! I shall see him again!"

All traces of resentment against her husband, however cruelly he may have treated her, had vanished. All she thought of now was to have him with her again. She would forgive anything. She even found herself



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taking the blame for the whole unfortunate affair. It had been her lack of sympathy in his work, her coldness, that had driven him away. She would be a different wife to him from now on. But Sullivan, though he did not tell her so, did not believe that she would ever see the professor alive again. In response to her hopeful exclamation he said:

"Well, madam, let us hope, let us hope. Anyway, I can't tell you more at present. I would advise you to go home and wait. I will see you later in the evening, and perhaps we can clear up everything to-night. Only be prepared——" he was about to add "for the worst," but changed his mind, and said: "for disappointment."

"More!" said Mrs. Hopkins with a bitter smile. "I can't stand very much more! Not very much!"

Sullivan watched her go toward her home. Then he turned and hurried to the Dean's house.

It was late when he came out again. In the meantime he had heard the story of Dan

Hawkins, and made the blind fiddler swear to what he had seen. Sullivan sent him away under a pledge of secrecy to tell his story to nobody else. Then he and the Dean went over the entire case thoroughly.

"I've got here what I think are clues," said he, taking the batch of newspaper clippings out of his pocket. "The reason I think so is that they are all about this new thing they call radium, and I've been told that Professor Hopkins was some daffy about the thing himself. Let's look 'em over."

As a result of this looking over, they learned enough to make them sit staring at each other in dumb amazement.

There was an account of an experiment by Dr. Emil Javal, a distinguished Parisian scientist, blind from birth, who had succeeded in making the blind see by means of radium barium carbonate, the ordinary radium of commerce.

"Read that again," cried Sullivan, when the Dean had made him acquainted with the facts of this report. The Dean did so. "By

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Jove," said Sullivan, "don't it look like this blind man's story might have something in it?"

"It certainly does," assented the Dean. "Radium does many strange things. Its effect on diamonds, for instance——"

"What's that," demanded the detective, putting his hand unconsciously on the gem in his scarf. "What does it do to diamonds?"

"A diamond placed under the effect of radium rays," said the Dean, "takes on a strange effulgence that is imparted to nothing else, except, in rare cases, to certain kinds of stone. The diamond glows, seems to throw out living rays, and acts most peculiarly."

"And how long does this last?" demanded Sullivan breathlessly.

"A very short time after the influence of the radium rays is removed," said the Dean. "Why?"

Then Sullivan went on to tell him of the affair in the woods on Monday night, when his diamond behaved so peculiarly.

"You must have been in close juxtaposition

to some radio-active substance," was the Dean's conclusion. "I wonder what it was."

"I'm going to find out, and mighty quick," said Sullivan, with an odd look in his eye. "And now, Dean, here's something else."

From under his coat he took out the sheets of paper which he had found in the ice-house.

"What's that paper?" he asked. "Use any of it around the college?"

"Why, yes," said the Dean. "That's blueprint paper—a sensitised paper used in photography. Where did you get it?"

"Never mind, just yet," said Sullivan. "What I want to know is, isn't there something among those clippings about a man taking photographs with radium?"

"I think we ran across it," said the Dean, rummaging among the papers again. "Yes, here it is. It is the report of a Mr. Skinner, made to the British Physical Society, in June, 1907, concerning the Becquerel Rays. Professor Henri Becquerel of Paris placed an aluminum medal in a blank paper envelope, and covered this with a card on which were

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sprinkled some radio-active crystals. The card was made of a sensitised paper, and the effect of the crystals was to imprint upon it, in spite of the thickness of the black envelope, a distinct radiograph of the coin."

"A radiograph is a photograph, isn't it?" asked Sullivan.

"It would be called so," said the Dean.

"And could radium, or something like it, make a photograph on this blue-print paper?" The Dean nodded. "Then," said Sullivan, "I bet we've got the end of the Hopkins case right here!"

He laid the paper on the floor and tried to piece the various sheets together. The Dean watched him for some time in silence. At length he asked the detective:

"May I inquire what you are trying to do?"

"I'll tell you," said Sullivan. "I found this in the ice-house, and it's been used to wrap something up in. I think more than likely it was around whatever caused my diamond to glisten so. If that's the case, these markings may show what was in the bundle.

Look at that spot, now. Don't it look like a human eye?"

The Dean examined the paper. "I'm afraid I haven't your imagination," he said.

"Well, it does to me," said Sullivan. "And I'm sure the whole thing, if I could put the pieces together just right, would show us a face." He went at his task again, rearranging the various sheets, but his success was not apparent. Suddenly he stopped, with a laugh.

"I've got it," he cried. "Watch now."

He saw that his error had been in not accounting for the overlapping of the edges of the sheets, supposing, of course, that they had really formed the wrapping for a bundle. On some of the pieces the marks were faint, on others much more definite. Sometimes a strong marking became dim right in the middle of a sheet. With pins and a pot of paste he now began rearranging the sheets of paper and fastening them in place. After half an hour's work, he stood up and looked at the result.

It showed a figure of some sort, but not like anything which he could recognise. Cer-

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tainly not a human being. In a fortunate instant, however, a thought came to him that brought a startled exclamation to his lips.

"There it is," he shouted. "There it is! It's the figure of a man photographed from all sides at once—the picture of a man rolled out flat!"

"Goodness!" cried the Dean, "How did they roll a man out flat?"

"They didn't," said Sullivan. "They rolled the paper around him. Don't you see? Look!" He formed the mended wrapping in the shape that it would naturally have taken when tied around a body. Then he held it up so that the light of the study lamp illuminated the interior. "Look inside!" he cried, to the Dean, holding the pipe-shaped object before that individual's astonished eyes. The Dean looked. The paper trembled and shook in Sullivan's excited grasp, but the Dean could see. He fell back with a sob of startled conviction.

"Good Lord of heaven!" he cried, "It's Hopkins!"

## **TWO SECRETS TOLD**





## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### TWO SECRETS TOLD

WHEN Ernesta Frost, clinging to Gordon's arm, started to cross Madison Square after her visit to an office building on Twenty-third Street, her face was wreathed in smiles. For the first time in many hours the girl had a feeling of complete happiness. The terrible strain was over; the strain not only of having to perform a confidential mission of tremendous importance, but of keeping that mission secret from the man she loved.

In the next instant, however, the sight of a man sitting on a bench, his back toward them, leaning far over and reading a newspaper as though he saw something in it of vital interest to him, made her smile change to a look of horror. She drew back with a little gasp and her clutch on her companion's arm tightened for protection.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, George," she cried; "let's hurry! Hurry!" And she tried to turn Gordon in the opposite direction. He was obstinate and stood his ground, with the feeling that something had occurred to terrify Ernesta, that perhaps some man in the crowd had insulted her by a look, a smile. He was ready to be her champion. "What is it? What is it?" he demanded.

"A man," she faltered. "He's been following me—in Boston and—and here." Involuntarily her eyes were set in the direction of the all-unconscious Sullivan, at that moment engaged in reading the astonishing dispatch from Graydon. Gordon took the direction from her gaze and strode with clenched fists toward the man whose back only he could see. Ernesta vainly tried to draw him back. She was dragged along by him. Then, as Gordon reached a point directly behind Sullivan, she cried, "Yes, that's the man!"

Gordon leaped forward, ready to punish

the insolent person for whatever he might have done. Suddenly, as we have learned, his manner changed. His fists relaxed and his belligerent expression turned to one of abject fear. He recognised Sullivan as the mysterious stranger whom he had seen at the station in Graydon. He instantly connected him with the Hopkins matter, and leaped to the conclusion that what he had feared had come to pass. His disappearance from Graydon had pointed the finger of accusation at him, and they had sent this man to find him.

Gordon was not a coward, but he was panic-stricken. The most timid men walk to the gallows smilingly. The bravest cower and have to be dragged there. Gordon was no longer a man; he was a hunted criminal. His one idea was to escape. He grasped Ernesta by the wrist and fled.

A few blocks up the avenue it came to him that if they could distance Sullivan, whom he saw following them, they could catch the next train for Boston, which went, as he well knew, at ten-thirty. When Sullivan's taxi-

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cab was held up by the traffic regulations, Gordon's heart leaped for joy. He did not look back again, believing that he and Ernesta were safe. To his dismay, as he left the ticket window, he saw the detective coming in at the side door of the station. Gordon made a wild rush, dragging the protesting girl with him, across the waiting-room and through the door. Sullivan was a leap in the rear. Then, with the realisation that the detective would certainly overhaul him, Gordon stopped short, waited for the pursuer to reach him, and launched the blow that sent Sullivan sprawling on the floor.

Ernesta uttered a shriek and fell in a faint. Gordon turned from the detective to her, and caught her or she would have fallen to the ground. He bent over her, forgetful of all else, calling on her to speak to him. A porter brought water and dashed it in her face. At last she opened her eyes, and Gordon cried:

"Come, come! The train! We must get it!"

He lifted her to her feet; she tried, swaying, to walk, and they reached the gate. It was closed.

"Too late," said the guard unfeelingly. "The fellow you knocked down caught it—but you've lost it!"

Gordon was quick to act. He led Ernesta through the curious crowd that had assembled, to the street. A willing cab driver took them in and whirled away with them, Gordon sitting back limp, Ernesta in a tremor of astonishment. At last she found her voice and asked:

"George, George! What does it all mean? Who was he? Where are we going?"

He gave no reply, and she shook him by the arm. This awoke him, and he signalled the driver.

"City Hall," he said. Then, turning to Ernesta, he said: "We are going to get married."

"Married!" she repeated, with a gasp and a blush.

"Yes," said Gordon, "because I want to

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tell you all, and I want you to tell me all. And it can't be told until we are man and wife!"

The law had not yet been passed requiring an intended bride and groom to obtain a marriage license in advance, in New York city. Gordon and Ernesta, therefore, were standing in front of an alderman, hands clasped, mechanically replying to formal questions that made them one, in less than half an hour from the time they had left the station. They kept the cabman waiting, and, on coming out, they again were driven off. Then, and only then, did Gordon come fully to his senses. He turned to Ernesta, drew her to him, and kissed her fondly.

There was a moment of silence, each communing with their own thoughts.

"Ernesta," said Gordon soberly, "how much do you love me?"

The intensity of his tone bespoke great anxiety of mind. It told something even to his unsuspecting bride of the internal torment from which he was suffering.

"Why, George, dear," she said, studying his face for some clue to his reason for asking the question. "I love you with all my heart and soul. I've given myself to you. I've married you. What greater proof of her love can a woman give than that?"

She laid her hand gently on his arm and looked into his troubled face, the love-light shining from her eyes.

"Isn't that enough, George, dear?" she questioned.

"But—but——" he spoke with effort.

"But what?" she asked anxiously.

"If I was accused of something," said Gordon hesitatingly, "of something terrible, would you still love and trust me?"

"Of course I would," replied the bride with prompt assurance. "And I'd believe in you too. I'd know it couldn't be true."

"But if it was true?"

Ernesta looked at him, studying her own heart before she replied. It was with an effort that Gordon met her eyes; but meet them he did.



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"I know," she said with the solemnity of conviction, "that the man I love, the only man I ever have loved, the man I have married, has a clean soul. I know that he is an honest, honourable man. I just know that he could do nothing shameful, nothing disgraceful, nothing in the least wrong."

Oh, how hard she was making it for her husband to confess. He wanted to tell her everything, to describe in detail all the strange events that had preceded his departure from Graydon, but how could he now. He felt that it was beyond his strength to say the words that must inevitably shatter her faith and belief in him. He essayed a new beginning.

"But suppose your husband had been very foolish, suppose appearances were very much against him, suppose his great love for you had led him to do indiscreet things, had led him into circumstances that made him seem guilty, that almost made him feel guilty, suppose he should be arrested and sent to prison——"

Ernesta clutched his arm. He could feel her little hand trembling on his sleeve. Was it fear?

"Stop, George," she said firmly. "When I married you a few minutes ago, I married you for better or worse. It doesn't make any difference what you are accused of. No,"—her voice rang out with passionate defiance—"it doesn't make any difference what you are guilty of; I tell you that I love you and that I will love you so long as I have life. Our two lives are one from now on for ever. Whatever it is, I'll love you just the same, but tell me, what is it?"

Still Gordon hesitated. He was trying to frame his confession in words that would make the shock to the woman he loved as light as possible.

"Since Professor Hopkins died——"

"What!" exclaimed the startled Ernesta. "Is Professor Hopkins dead? When did he die? Why didn't you tell me about it before? Oh, it's terrible, terrible—just at this time, too. Tell me all about it. What did he die

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of? Was it very sudden? What killed him?"

"That's just it," said Gordon. "I don't know. Nobody knows. It is a mystery."

All that he had said before came back to Ernesta now with new meaning and with it came still deeper perplexity as to his strange demeanour. In what possible way could her husband be concerned in Professor Hopkins' death. She must hear all the facts and meanwhile try to keep her thoughts collected. She must not give way to the grief she naturally felt for the brilliant old scientist with whom she had been so closely associated for the last four years.

"I don't understand," she said. "Begin at the beginning and tell me all about it."

"It was Snyder who really began it," said Gordon lamely, conscious of some feeling of shame that he was already beginning to try to shift the blame for the disgraceful part he had played on another who was not there to defend himself. His words to Ernesta might

acquit him of guilt. His conscience never would.

"Snyder saw you," he continued, "you and Professor Hopkins in the laboratory late at night. He watched you from his window. He saw your shadows against the laboratory blinds. He said the professor seemed very much excited about something and then"—Gordon hesitated—"he said he saw the professor kiss you."

"Did he?" said Ernesta, not without a blush. "I really don't remember. We were both so very much excited. He may have kissed me, but if he did he meant nothing by it. I'll tell you all about it when you have finished your story."

Her apparent frankness routed any lingering suspicion of her that might have remained in Gordon's mind.

"Of course," he hastened to say, "I didn't believe there was anything wrong. I knew that you would be able to explain it all satisfactorily, but Snyder told what he had seen to Rice and Fischer and me and suggested that

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we would watch Professor Hopkins and get proof——”

“Proof of what?” demanded Ernesta.

“—of his suspicions. I knew that he could not, but I felt that the wisest thing for me was to appear to acquiesce in their plans so that I would be on hand to protect you——”

“Protect me from what?”

“His suspicions. And so——” Gordon hesitated. He was finding it harder and harder to tell of the spying they had done at the laboratory. Retrospectively he wondered at the part he had himself played. How could he ever have mistrusted such a woman as Ernesta? What spirit of evil was it that had led him, despite his conviction of her utter innocence, into such an imbroglio.

“Go on,” said Ernesta calmly.

“We tried the laboratory door and it was locked.”

“Of course it was,” said his bride. “Professor Hopkins always locked it when he was conducting his own experiments.”

“Then,” said Gordon, “somebody—I think

it was Rice—suggested that we might go up on the roof and look down into the laboratory through the skylight and we did so and——”

Again he hesitated.

“And what?” asked Ernesta.

“We couldn’t see anything, but we could hear Professor Hopkins’ voice in the inner laboratory. It sounded as if he was talking to someone.”

“And you all thought that it was I, of course,” said Ernesta.

“The others all thought so,” said Gordon evasively; “so someone went and got a ladder and we pushed up the skylight and went down the ladder into the laboratory. Fischer was the last. The ladder slipped with him and came down with a crash. Professor Hopkins turned and saw us just as we entered the inner laboratory.”

“What happened then?”

“There was no one in there with him. He was talking to himself.”

“He often did that,” interjected his late

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assistant; "always, when he was conducting his own experiments."

"Anyhow he acted like a madman. He had a graduated glass in his hand with some compound in it."

Ernesta nodded.

"I know what it was," she said. "It was his great discovery."

"He raved at us all," Gordon went on. "He accused us of trying to steal his secret. His actions so approached those of a maniac that someone suggested overpowering him. That only served to increase his fury. Breathing defiance at us, before any one of us could stop him, he drained the contents of the glass and dropped dead instantly at our feet."

"How horrible!" cried Ernesta. "Poor, dear old Professor Hopkins."

"But that wasn't the worst of it," Gordon continued. "Someone—it was you—came and tried the door of the laboratory. We heard your voice."

"I remember," said Ernesta, "I came back for—never mind, go on."

"It was an embarrassing situation," said Gordon, trying his best to make their subsequent irrational actions appear logical. "We did not want anyone to come in and find the body there and discover that we had crept in through the skylight to spy on him. It would have been hard to explain. Now that Professor Hopkins was dead there was no need for anyone to know of our—of Snyder's suspicions about him. At the same time we could not think, in the suddenness of it all, how we were going to give a satisfactory account of his death. Someone suggested hiding the body, just temporarily, until we could think it over and decide on what sort of a story we would give out about his death."

"It was Snyder who suggested that," said Ernesta. "I know it was. I always thought he was a sneak."

"We all agreed to it," Gordon asserted. "We did not want any scandal. We were only thinking of the reputation of the college."

"Of course," Ernesta almost sneered.



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"You were not thinking about yourselves at all."

"Perhaps we were," Gordon admitted. "At any rate we put the body in the lower part of the big cupboard and closed the doors. Then we removed the ladder and went into Snyder's room to talk it over. While we were there we heard an unearthly shriek from the laboratory. Everybody thought that it was you. We supposed that you had come back and found the body there. We all rushed back to the laboratory."

"I was on my way to Boston, then," said Ernesta. "It was not I."

"No, it was the scrub woman. She had gone in there to clean up and the minute she entered the inner laboratory had seen——"

"Professor Hopkins' body?" interjected Ernesta.

"No," said Gordon, "she did not see the body."

"What then?" the girl asked breathlessly.

Her husband paused. It was difficult to describe the mysterious light that had so ter-

rified them all. It was even more difficult to talk about it at all, but he went bravely on:

"I do not know what it was that she saw. We none of us could conjecture. We all saw it too but we could not account for it. From the cupboard where we had hid the body a strange white light radiated. It certainly was enough to terrify anyone."

"What did you do?"

"We got the scrub woman out of the building and then we opened the cupboard. We found—we found the body of Professor Hopkins entirely filled with a strange, penetrating luminosity. We could not account for it."

"I can," said Ernesta," "but go on."

"It was utterly out of the question to take the body home in that condition. Think what a shock it would have been to poor Mrs. Hopkins. It was equally impossible to leave it where it was and have the janitor or the students discover it in the morning. After some discussion we decided to hide it until the strange brilliancy had abated."

"To hide it—where?"

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"That was the question. Many places were talked of and finally we wrapped it up in blue-print paper and took it in a wheelbarrow out to the old ice-house on the shore of the pond and covered it with some boards and sawdust."

"And left it there?" asked Ernesta with horror in her tone. "Poor Professor Hopkins."

Gordon nodded.

"Where is the body now?"

"I do not know. I suppose it is still there. I had not heard of its being found before I left Graydon."

"But I don't see quite yet," said Ernesta, "what makes you think you may be suspected. If the body has not been found yet, how does anybody know? Did anyone see you take the body out there to the pond in the wheelbarrow?"

Gordon shook his head.

"Not that I know of. You can imagine, though, that the sudden disappearance of the professor caused quite a sensation."

"When was it first learned that he was missing?"

"I don't know. One of us pinned a note on his door saying that he had been called away unexpectedly."

"But what about Mrs. Hopkins? Wasn't she worried about him?"

"She must have been, though I did not hear of her making any inquiries about him. People did a lot of talking. Some of them"—it was Gordon's turn to blush now—"even hinted that you and the professor had eloped."

"How absurd."

"Of course; but you must remember that you and he had spent a great deal of time together and that you both disappeared at the same time, and nobody but myself knows where you both are."

"Still," objected Ernesta, "I do not see why you should think you are suspected of knowing anything about Professor Hopkins."

"There are several things. I was the first one the Dean asked the next morning about Professor Hopkins. You remember, too, that

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strange man we saw in Madison Square, the man who followed us to the station."

"Yes," said Ernesta, "I saw him in Boston, too."

"I am certain he is a detective and that he is following me. I went down to the station to try to find out if you had left Graydon and he was there. He stopped me to ask me for a match and the way he peered into my face aroused my suspicion."

Ernesta gave a little shiver.

"Do you suppose he is still after us?"

"What if he is?" said Gordon, giving her hand a reassuring clasp. "You are mine now and I can protect you."

Both sat silent pondering over the strange happenings that had so suddenly come into their hitherto uneventful lives. It was Ernesta who first spoke again.

"George, dear," she said, "I think I had better tell my story now. It will help clear up, perhaps, some of the things in yours that seemed so inexplicable. Our marriage and Professor Hopkins' death under these strange

circumstances surely release me from the pledge I made to the professor to keep everything secret."

"Yes, my dear," said Gordon gravely, "I think the circumstances fully absolve you from any pledge of secrecy. Tell me your story and then we will decide what we are to do."

If Gordon's tale was calculated to astound his bride, hers was none the less astounding.

Here is what she told him:

"For the last six months Professor Hopkins has been experimenting with radium. At first he would not tell even me what his expectations were. When I asked him, he would only say that if he succeeded in accomplishing what he hoped he would be, not only the most famous chemist in the world, but, perhaps, one of the richest. Day after day, when the last class had left, he would ask me to remain in the laboratory with him, working out abstruse formulæ, reading long reports on the results of experiments in the same field by various scientists all over the world, writing, at his dictation, long letters to different

persons, several of these letters being to Monsieur and Madame Curie, the discoverers of radium. I had to take notes, read papers, prepare apparatus, and all the time with only a vague idea of what it was all about.

"After awhile he got so that he would require my presence in the laboratory in the evening, and then, you know, George, what you thought, and how we quarrelled."

"That is forgotten," said George. "Go on."

"Professor Hopkins had secured a small quantity of radium, through the courtesy of the Curies. His constant experiments, many of which were failures, finally exhausted this supply, and for several days he was very much downcast. He told me, when I asked him about it, that the reason for his discouragement was that his shortage should exist at the very time when he saw success ahead of him. I begged him to let me into his confidence more fully, and finally he said that he would.

"What he told me made me fear for his

reason at first. He was confident, he told me, that radium rays or emanations were capable of exerting an effect on animal life that science had never dreamed of. He was on the point, he declared, of making a compound that would revolutionise the world in its far-reaching effects. He would not tell me what it was, but he assured me that it was the most wonderful discovery ever made in any field of science, and he would tell me all, but that he was afraid that I would think he had gone insane.

“‘Now,’ said he, ‘I am about to call on you for help in a most critical situation. I have been afraid lately that the nature of my experiments has become known, or is suspected, by some of the members of the faculty. I have seen Professor Gordon looking at me strangely on various occasions.’”

“You know why,” interrupted Gordon. Ernesta pressed his hand and continued:

“‘I fear to leave my laboratory lest they will break in and try to see what I am doing here. It is absolutely necessary that I should



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have another ounce of radium.' I looked at him in astonishment. I knew that radium was worth several thousand dollars an ounce, and that there was not that quantity in America. There were not over seven ounces of it in existence in the world, according to report, at that time. He divined my thoughts and said: 'I know what you are thinking. Radium, as I am well aware, is worth at least \$5,000 an ounce. That is all right. I have privately written to Madame Curie of Paris, to beg her to let me have an ounce. After much persuasion, and only by revealing to her part of the nature of my experiments, she has agreed to sell it to me. A few days ago an agent of hers sailed for New York in possession of the priceless metal. He will arrive on May 20. I do not want to ask him to come here, nor do I dare to go to him. In the first place, my absence would cause comment, and in the second place I do not dare leave my experiments in the condition they are now in. I am almost on the verge of closing them successfully. I have thought on one or two oc-

casions that even with the materials I now have on hand they were going to be successful at any moment. But I fear and it is not worth while taking chances. If I should fail now for lack of the radium it would kill me. Therefore, will you go to New York and get the radium from the agent of the Curies?' "

"The agent," interrupted Gordon, "was—was Albert Rassignol?" Ernesta nodded, with a smile, and continued the narration of her conversation with Professor Hopkins.

"'But,' said I, 'the money—the \$5,000.'"

"'You shall have that,' he said. 'Meet me to-night, here, in the laboratory. I will give you five thousand dollars.'"

"I hesitated. I did not want to go away from you, George, while our quarrel was in progress. Nor did I like the responsibility imposed on me by the professor. He asked me to think it over, and to let him know on the following day. After consideration, I thought I would do as he asked, he had been so kind to me and was so earnest in this instance. So I dropped a little note to him,

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and told him I agreed to go. I also reminded him that he need not fear that I would tell anybody the secret.

"I had forgotten the date on which the agent from Paris was to arrive in New York, so when I went to the laboratory on Monday evening to get the money, I was not prepared to go at once. Professor Hopkins reminded me, however, that I must leave that night, and that I had just time to catch the eight o'clock train. I took the money—all in bills—and started for the train. Suddenly I remembered that he had not told me where I was to meet the agent in New York. I ran back to the laboratory. It was locked. I called his name, thinking he must be in there. No answer, and I looked through the keyhole. It was then——"

"Yes," said Gordon, shuddering at the memory, "it was then."

"Suddenly I recalled that the professor had given me the money wrapped in a slip of paper. I took this out as I went back down the village street, having started for Professor

Hopkins' house to get further instructions. To my delight the slip of paper contained instructions, the agent's name and address, that building I went into on Madison Square. I hurried for the train, but, on looking at my watch, I found that I had lost it.

"I was in dismay. I did not dare wait till morning. I did not know what to do. Just then Dr. Carter drove by in his buggy. He was going over to Hardwick on a sudden call. I asked him if he would take me over, so that I could catch the trolley, thinking that in this way I could connect somewhere with a train to New York.

"He did so and never asked me why I was in such a hurry.

"I found that there was no train to New York that I could catch, but one to Boston, which I got. I spent the night in Boston, and in the morning hurried to the station to take a train to New York. The agent might arrive on Tuesday, Professor Hopkins had said, which was my reason for wishing to go to New York so early.

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"It was then that I lost the money and telegraphed to you. The rest you know. The man we saw in Madison Square I saw as I looked out of the lawyer's window in Boston, when you were getting the money for me. He had the next room to mine in the hotel last night, and when I saw him in the park I was completely unnerved."

"And now you have the radium, and Professor Hopkins is dead!" cried Gordon.

"It is horrible, horrible!" said Ernesta. "Oh, the poor old man! The poor old man! What is to be done?"

"We must wait to see," said Gordon.

"No," said Ernesta, with a sudden burst of decision. "We must not wait, George, you must do as I say. You must—we must—go back to Graydon at once and—and tell all. Yes," she continued, as Gordon seemed to wince at this suggestion, "It is the only way. You are my husband now, and you must be an honourable man. You are to go back to Graydon. Tell the cabman to drive to the station."

Gordon was clay in the hands of his wife. He did her bidding to the letter, and they took the train for Boston leaving New York at one o'clock. It was a strange beginning for a honeymoon.



## **DETECTIVE SULLIVAN'S SHOCK**





## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### DETECTIVE SULLIVAN'S SHOCK

THE setting of Thursday's sun found the three hardened conspirators in a desperate mood. As the great red ball sank behind the western hills they turned their gaze furtively in the direction of the cemetery, scarcely daring to breathe. Six thousand other eyes in Graydon were turned in the same direction, and the professors found themselves so brutal as to wish that blindness might strike the eyes of the entire population—except themselves—in case the glow was to appear again from the vault.

Not that they had changed their minds about their course in this event. They were ready, in the case of necessity, to stand forth in the village forum, which was in front of the drug store, and announce their perfect willingness to lead an investigating party to

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find out what was causing the puzzling illumination. But though they waited and waited, and it grew darker and darker, the light did not come.

"Are you sure you can see nothing?" asked Snyder of Rice, as they met on the street. "Your eyes are better than mine. Look closely."

"There is not a sign of it," said Rice, "not a sign. But wait."

Finally it became evident that the light would not appear to-night. They were not disappointed, naturally, though the rest of Graydon was and did not hesitate to express itself so. The town felt that it had been cheated, and went to bed early, grumbling.

"But what shall we do now?" asked Snyder, when it was decided that the opportunity for heading a searching party had vanished as completely as the light itself. "Are we going to leave the—leave it over there?"

Rice looked at Fischer, who, in his new capacity as leader, was deeply engaged in thought. The German professor did not like

the way matters had turned out. His plan for ending the difficulty had seemed to him such a good one that he hated to see it proved ineffective. He was almost hoping that the light had repeated its performance of the previous night.

"Vell," he said, "der situation has changed. Evidently der peculiar properties of our friend vich caused it to glow dot vay haf exhausted demselves. But dot don't alter the fact dot it is still dere. It may not be seen, but it exists. Now, are ve to leaf it dere? It stands to reason dot of all der people in dis town, somebody is going to investigate sooner or later. Besides——"

"Look!" cried Snyder in a frightened whisper. They were passing Dean Quimby's house. Snyder had looked in that direction, attracted by a light in the hall. What he saw made the blood freeze in his veins. In the hall, by the open door, stood the Dean, and with him, apparently about to come out, the mysterious stranger they had seen around the college so often on Tuesday, but who had dis-

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appeared during the day. Strangers were rare in Graydon, especially strangers who visited the Dean and spent an hour with him in his study during college hours, unless they were other scholars from out of town. This man was not a scholar, judging from appearances. There was something about him that aroused the suspicions of all three. At Snyder's warning they stopped. The lilac bushes in the Dean's front yard, by the fence, hid them as they stepped back a few paces, and they could listen without being observed. The Dean and the stranger stepped out on the piazza.

"And how do I get there?" asked the stranger.

"Turn to the right and keep along as far as the street leads," said the Dean. "Then to the right again, by the woods, until you come to two roads. Take the right again, the one lined with hawthorn bushes, and it will lead you directly to the gate. A path leads right up to the top of the hill."

"Thanks," said the stranger. "Bye and bye, when there's less danger of being seen, I

think I'll go up and make an investigation. Now, I'm going to look around."

"Good luck," said the Dean, "and don't forget to keep me informed of everything that happens. I shall not go to bed to-night, but will remain up and ready to lend you any assistance you may require."

"Good," said the stranger. "Oh, by the way, I left some of those papers in your library."

The Dean and the stranger re-entered the house and the door closed.

The trio in the shadow of the lilacs awoke.

"Did you hear what he said? Did you hear it?" snapped Snyder.

"I did," said Rice. "He's a detective."

"Yes," said Fischer, "and he's going over to der cemetery to-night to see vat made der light. He vill be too late. Come along!"

He buttoned his coat tightly around his stocky figure, pulled his slouch hat down over his eyes and set off at a pace that Rice and even the long-legged Snyder had difficulty in maintaining.

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Nothing was said for some time, until they had deviated from the main road and turned off toward the hawthorn path that they had once before travelled in company. Then the curious Snyder made bold to ask with what little breath he could spare from walking:

“Wha—what are we going to do now?”

“Ve are going to get it,” said Fischer. “Ve are going to take der body back to der college building!”

“The college building!” Rice and Snyder sprang the words with surprised emphasis.

“Yes, of course,” said Fischer. “It is now der only vay out of der mess. Listen. Der body must be found, mustn’t it?”

“Unless——” said Rice.

“Oh, I haf t’ought of all dot. Quicklime, at the bottom of some pond—everyt’ing. It could not be safe. It might leave some traces. Let dem find der body since dey must, but under natural conditions. Der observatory of der college has not been used in several weeks. Ve vill put it up dere, vid der pieces of dot graduating glass by its side—der von he broke

ven he drank vot vas in it. Snyder, you vill go to the laboratory und pick up der pieces—all you can find.”

“But,” objected Rice, “the note Snyder put on the laboratory door.”

“Nuttings at all,” said Fischer. “Snyder wrote dot note because Hopkins asked him to. Hopkins vas disappointed in some experiments he has been making; he vished to commit suicide, of course.” This was the German way of looking at it, for a fact! “Vell, he had not der courage to say so; he had to use deceit, concealment—it is all in line vid his usual vay of keeping t’ings to himself. So he told Snyder he vas going away, got him to put der note on der door, crept up into der observatory, und—vell, dere dey vill find him.”

“When?” asked Snyder.

“How can I tell?” asked Fischer. “It is not my lookout. It is der detective’s!”

Probably, in their excited state of mind, Rice and Snyder would have assented to any plan less feasible than this one. Fischer’s



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suggestion now seemed perfectly practical to them. They wondered why they had not thought of it themselves. In detail it was so complete, even to the manner of suicide. The discovery of the graduating glass by the side of the body; an analysis of its contents compared to the contents of the stomach—why, everything was so well worked out! It was masterful. Snyder alone had an objection. He did not like to go to the laboratory to get the pieces of glass.

The others, however, overruled him, so he finally assented.

They had no wheelbarrow with them this time. When they reached the vault in which lay the dangerous object that had caused them so much trouble, they realised that they must carry it back in their arms. They did not relish the idea. Not even the phlegmatic Fischer. But it had to be done. The trio assisted each other in lifting it out of the vault, and then the German flung it upon his shoulder and they resumed their homeward journey. They uttered not a word. There was no

topic open for conversation, except once, when Fischer stumbled and said:

"Look out!"

Rice was just in time with a balancing touch to keep the German from dropping his ghastly bundle. Again when the blankets became partially unwrapped and trailed on the ground, Fischer asked Snyder to tuck them in. He did so, but it was a dreadful task.

They all noted with satisfaction that the luminosity of the body seemed entirely to have vanished. It gave forth no tell-tale glow through the blankets. It was just like any other body now. But it was too late, they realised, for this to be of any benefit to them. If it had only happened before they put it in the ice-house! If it had only never glowed!

The burden was such a heavy one and Fischer groaned under it so toward the end that Rice volunteered to relieve him.

"No," said the German, "no; I am all right. Snyder, go ahead and get into der laboratory. Dat is all."

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"I will leave you as we pass the laboratory, go in and find the fragments, and rejoin you in the observatory," suggested Snyder, unwilling to be left alone for any longer than was necessary.

"All right," grunted Fischer. Rice only sniffed at their companion's cowardice.

They took the course over the college hill behind the town by the ice-pond. They were too eager to be affected by the familiar spots they had to pass.

"Ve vill go round by der back vay," said Fischer; "it is safer, I guess."

At the rear of the college building was an open space, the building sheltering it on two sides. The door for which they were aiming was at the intersection of the two sides of the structure, and connected directly with the stairs leading to the second floor. They entered and, with much work, carried their burden upstairs, along the hall, past the laboratory door and up the short steps to the observatory. These steps were directly outside the laboratory, and Snyder left them at

that moment, unlocking the room with the key which remained in the door.

He did not dare turn up the electric light but hunted about the floor for the pieces of glass. It took him a long time to find them. Once he thought he had enough and hurried upstairs to the observatory. But Fischer told him that he must find more—all he could. Otherwise it would not look like a complete glass. So Snyder went back to his task.

Finally it was done. He found practically all the glass. The few crumbs that were too small to carry he brushed out of sight on the floor of the laboratory. Taking it upstairs, he and Fischer and Rice scattered the bits about so that they would look as though they had been shattered by being dropped by the dead man. They arranged Hopkins, now shorn of his blankets and just as they had last seen him alive, in such a position as they imagined a man would assume who had taken a drink of poison and fallen to the ground, dead. They had an example to follow in this arrangement, it must be remembered—the mem-

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ory of how he really had looked, that night in the laboratory.

All this took time. It was fully half an hour before they considered their task complete and stole downstairs into Snyder's classroom, to put their clothing in order and clean away any signs of their work.

"Vell," said Fischer, at last, standing before a mirror and brushing his scant hair by the light of a candle which they had dared use to give some slight illumination. "Vell, gentlemen, I t'ink it is over. If now dere should be any investigation I do not believe dat dere is any t'ing to connect us vid der affair."

"How about Gordon?" asked Rice.

"Nobody believes a man who runs away," said Fischer, "und besides, dey have not found Gordon."

"I hope they won't," said Snyder. "And now, as it is getting late, don't you think we had better be thinking about going home?"

"I am ready," said Fischer. "Come!"

For the first time since their troubles had

made them constant companions, Snyder took the lead. Now that the affair appeared to be nearing its end, he wished to be the first out of it. So, when Rice opened the door, Snyder slipped through in advance.

But the affair was not over, for them. Detective Sullivan, on leaving the Dean's house, which he had done directly after Snyder, Fischer and Rice had started for the cemetery, had gone to Mrs. Hopkins', where he had had a short talk with the unhappy woman, begging her to cheer up, but trying to circumspect hints, to prepare her for the worst.

"If your husband is as bad a man as we have thought," he said, "he would be better dead than alive to you, I should think. Especially if he carried any insurance."

"He did," said Mrs. Hopkins. "Here is the policy! I have been looking it over only to-day."

"Thrifty woman," thought Sullivan. "Well, maybe she will collect on it sooner than she expects."

He left her in a little while and retraced

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his steps. It was now late, and he thought he might as well pay his visit to the cemetery now as at any time. So he set off rapidly, passing the Dean's house without looking in, and taking the road directed.

He had turned the hawthorn path and was getting away from the village, when he thought he heard voices. He stepped to one side of the road and listened. The voices ceased, but he could hear heavy breathing. He was on the alert. In the gloom of the night he could see nothing, but he could hear everything. Finally, just as they passed him—and there was more than one person—he heard a familiar voice. It was Fischer's. It said:

"No, I am all right. Snyder, you run ahead now and get into der laboratory. Dat is all."

"But," came another voice, "I will leave you as we pass the laboratory, go in and find the fragments, and rejoin you in the observatory."

The detective felt that his heart beats must be audible to the men. By straining his eyes he could see them now that they had passed.

One of them, the German, was carrying a heavy bundle on his shoulders. Hopkins! It could be nothing else. But why were they taking it to the college observatory? Sullivan did not care why. The main point was that they were, and this was his opportunity to trap them. He waited until they were far enough ahead for him to dare follow. Then he crept after them in the dark. He could barely distinguish their movements when they turned off to go up the hill by the ice-pond. Then he turned to the left, dashed down the road and into Dean Quimby's house.

"Quick!" he cried. "Out with you and meet me at the foot of College Hill in two minutes!" He dashed out of the house again and along the road to the residence of Mrs. Hopkins. He dragged the astonished woman, bonnetless, out of her house, and back to the foot of the hill, where the Dean was standing, all aghast.

"Why, Mrs. Hopkins," he said, "what is it?"

"I don't know," stammered the woman.



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"Don't ask," said Sullivan, walking between them and fairly carrying them up the steep hill. "Mrs. Hopkins," he said, "this is unpleasant for you, and it's liable to be more unpleasant. But there are things in this world that we can't avoid and this is one of them. Be as brave as you can, and rest assured of one thing. What you are going to see and go through with in the next half hour is going to convince you that your husband wasn't as bad a man as you thought!"

"Wasn't!" gasped Mrs. Hopkins, beginning to guess the truth.

"Be brave!" said the Dean, consolingly. "All things go for the best!"

They were all three out of breath by the time they reached the college. Sullivan took them around by the side of the building and into the open space at the rear. "I think we will surprise them better that way," he said. "They may be watching and they won't look at this side of the building so much." In the open space he paused, unable to deter-

mine just what to do next. There was no sign of life or light about the building. All was silent and calm.

"You wait here," he said to the Dean and Mrs. Hopkins.

"Oh, my poor husband!" moaned the woman. "Look," she cried, pointing at the windows directly above where they stood, "Look! The windows of his laboratory!"

"Hush!" said the Dean, quietly.

Sullivan was tiptoeing to the door. They could hardly hear him move, so stealthy were his steps. He seemed to be listening. Finally they heard the door open, and could see the detective as he leaped back. In his hand something glistened brightly. They heard him cry:

"Halt, there! I've got you covered!"

There were frantic exclamations from some persons whom they could not see, and then the detective flashed his pocket-lantern, and its rays were focussed on Professors Rice, Snyder and Fischer, standing with hands raised above their heads, in the doorway of

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the building, for Sullivan had his revolver pointed straight at them. The Dean and Mrs. Hopkins stood rooted to the spot, the woman limp in his arms. Then they heard Sullivan say:

"Now, march this way!"

Silently Rice, Fischer and Snyder obeyed his command. He walked backward, his revolver still holding them as if by hypnotic power and leading them, shufflingly, on. They came out into the open, near the spot where the Dean and the wife of their victim stood. But the three men did not see the Dean and Mrs. Hopkins. Their frightened, bulging eyes were centred on but one object, the muzzle of Sullivan's revolver.

"Halt!" said Sullivan. They stopped with a simultaneous groan. The detective turned his head slightly. "Dean Quimby! Mrs. Hopkins!" he said. The Dean led Mrs. Hopkins toward the detective. "You see whom I have here?" said Sullivan, flashing the light more fully on the cowering trio. "Take a good look at them, because I'm going to say something else in a minute. Stop!" he cried,

suddenly, for Snyder seemed about to make a movement to get away, "Stop, or I'll shoot!"

"He's fainted dead away!" It was Rice's voice, cold, impassionate, mechanical.

"Good!" said Sullivan. "Let him lie there. Now, where is it?" There was no answer from Fischer and Rice. "You don't need to answer. I know where it is. It is in the observatory. I accuse you of putting it there. I accuse you of—My God in heaven!"

Sullivan was the only one in all the group facing the building now. As he spoke his revolver fell to his side, and the hand holding the pocket-light let it drop. But there was light to show the utter consternation on his face. Light enough to make plain the look of horror in his upturned eyes. And the light came from the laboratory window directly over where they stood. Slowly the others turned. What did they see to make them gasp, to make Mrs. Hopkins fall prostrate on the ground?

In the window of the laboratory, standing as though in the act of pressing the electric light button, was Josiah Hopkins!



## **CONCLUSION**



## CHAPTER TWENTY

### CONCLUSION

OF all the group, Rice alone maintained any degree of composure. He was by no means calm, but he did not entirely collapse. He looked at the figure in the window. It was Hopkins. There was no question about that. And it was not a ghost. Rice did not believe in ghosts. He did not wait to ask the detective's permission to do what he did next. Sullivan was in no condition to give it. Rice sprang across the courtyard, into the building and up the stairs. In the next instant, he was in the laboratory.

"Hopkins!" he shouted. "Hopkins!"

The figure turned. A sight of it, its clothes stained with contact with the earth to which they had been subjected, the features drawn and gaunt and dirt-covered, almost froze Rice's marrow. But it was alive, for it spoke. It said:



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"Well, what is it? What's the matter?"

"Hopkins," again cried Rice, approaching the man, "Don't you know me? I'm Rice. Come, man, give me your hand!" He took the cold, limp fingers of the professor of chemistry in his, and slapped him on the back to try and awaken him to his surroundings. He threw his arms about him, and then he led him to the window, which he threw wide open.

"Look! Look! You, Mr. Detective—everyone! It's he, I tell you! Speak to them, Hopkins! Speak to your wife. Don't you see her down there?"

"Josiah!" cried Mrs. Hopkins, stretching out her hands.

There came a word from the haggard, benumbed man in the window. It was in a hoarse, graveyard voice, but it was a voice. And it said, in the usual tired, disinterested way:

"Well, my dear?"

Then the Dean, like one walking in a dream, led Mrs. Hopkins up into her hus-

band's laboratory—the first time she had ever set foot in it—and they were clasped in each other's arms, while her tears fell warmer than they had been in many a year.

Sullivan was the last to follow into the room. He could not believe it yet. He stood in the doorway, looking in, wonderingly. Could this be some trick to cheat justice of her rights? Were his eyes and senses being hoodwinked in some way?

"What is it? What is it?" he demanded of himself, but he got no answer.

And then there were two more arrivals, Ernesta Fr—that is to say, Mrs. George Gordon and her husband. They saw the light in the laboratory and didn't know what it was. She dragged her husband into the building and up the stairs. At sight of the detective, Gordon himself took the initiative.

"Mr. Detective," he said, "I have come back to face the music."

"What music?" asked Sullivan in disgust.

An hour later, the Gordons, Mrs. Hopkins, the Dean and Detective Sullivan were gath-

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ered in the parlour of the Hopkins house. Professor Hopkins was upstairs in bed. Dr. Whittridge said that he did not think it would be pneumonia, but the patient must be kept very quiet for many days.

To say that the strange occurrences of the last few days, with their stranger dénouement, were explained in that meeting would be to exaggerate. They have never been explained. It is doubtful if they ever will be. Of course, the material aspects of the case were robbed of the veil of mystery that had shrouded them, but the manner of Professor Hopkins' recall to life—for such it was and must be acknowledged to be—was not and has never been satisfactorily cleared up.

In view of his since famous experiments along the line of the application of radium salts toward inducing the suspension of animation, it may be that the general public can find some solution for itself. It is well known that not only Professor Hopkins but Dr. Neuell of Berlin, have succeeded in exposing the larvæ of the *promethea* and *cecropia*

moths to the action of radium and destroying all apparent life during a period of more than three months, only to have the life return after the influence has been removed, and moth hatch out as perfect in all details as though the chrysalis had never been tampered with.

Professor Hopkins himself has never given out any statement on the subject. He declines to tell what was the nature of the concoction in the graduating glass which he drank to prevent his colleagues from learning his secret. He declines to say how and when he first felt life returning to him. Was it during the hideous night which he spent in the vault on Cemetery Hill? Was it while Professor Fischer was carrying him, like a meal sack, across the rough roads and up and down hill? Or was it not until they had left him in the observatory, to be found a suicide? As he will not tell, how can anybody else?

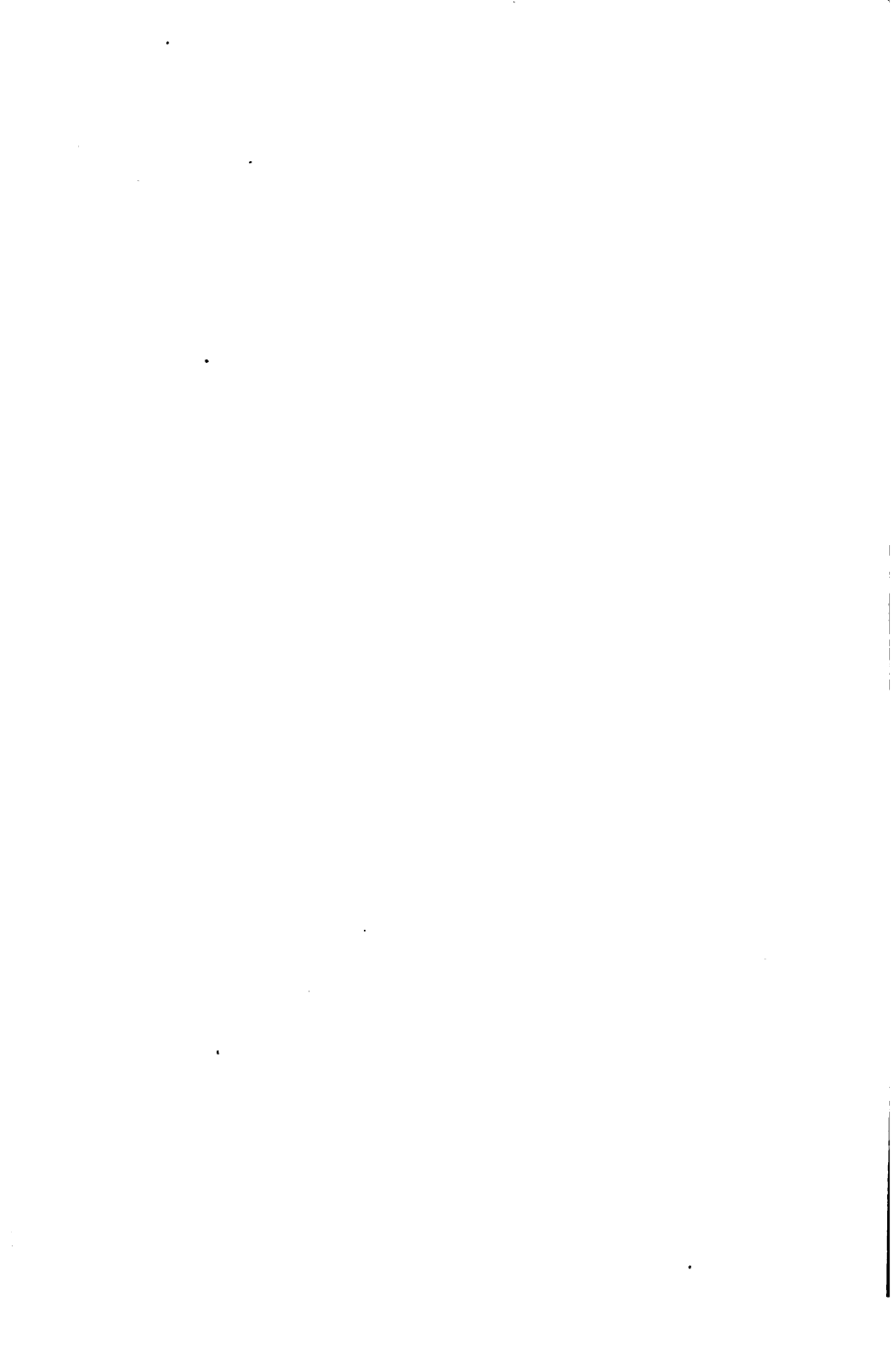
It is sufficient to say that Professors Rice, Snyder and Fischer found it advisable to resign from the faculty of Graydon College at once, their places for the remainder of the

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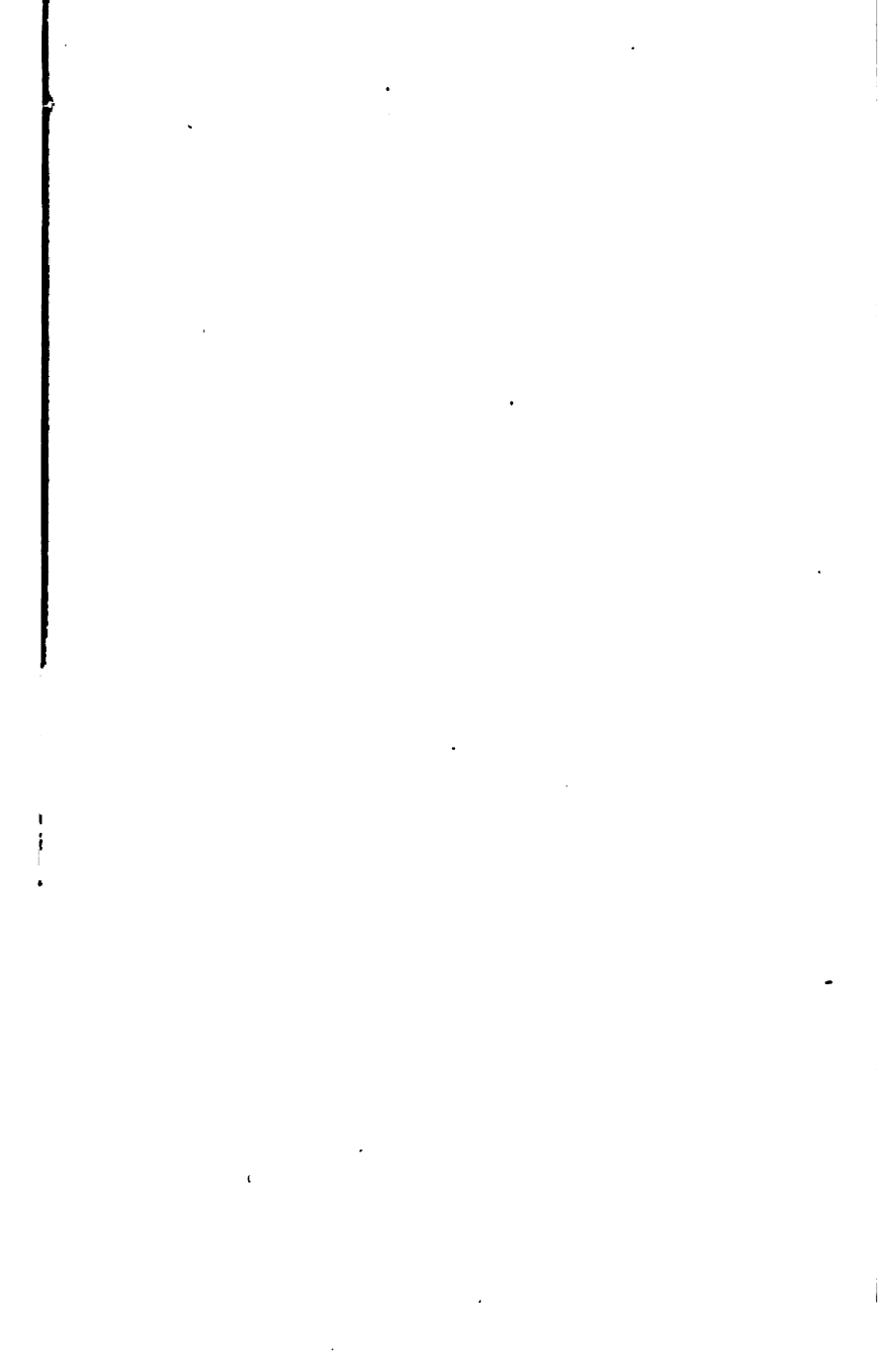
term being filled by worthy substitutes. Professor Hopkins and his wife, as the guests of Mme. Curie, went abroad during the summer, accompanied by Professor Gordon and his beautiful young wife. Detective Sullivan was at the dock to see them off.

It is not stated authoritatively, but rumour has it, that the money lost by Ernesta has long since been made up to her husband by Professor Hopkins, who insisted in repaying it. But then, he could well afford to, as his discoveries have brought him, and are still bringing him, much more every year than a mere \$5,000.

THE END











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